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PEOPLE AND PLACES

PEOPLE AND PLACES

BY

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

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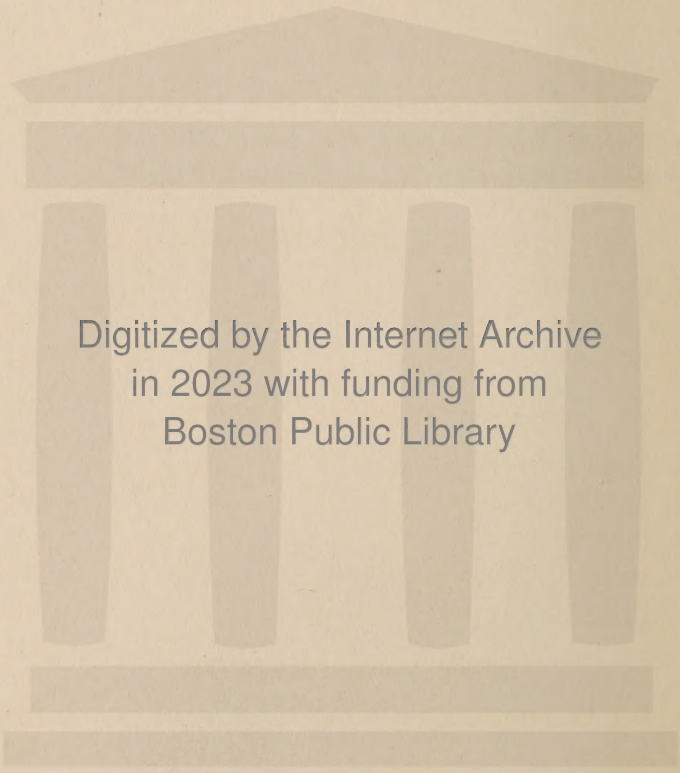
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PEOPLE AND PLACES

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MEDITERRANEAN SUMMERS

PEOPLE AND PLACES

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MEDITERRANEAN SUMMERS

I

MALLORCA

I

THERE are moments when one is constrained to share the Continental view regarding the Englishman's sanity, and to wonder, in amazement, whatever it is that makes us do the things which seem to come to us so naturally. Search the map of Europe and you will scarce find in any country a village so remote that it has not had, at one time or another, its English visitors. We take a pride in going to places which no traveller has ever thought it worth his while to go to before, and we are never so much ourselves as when we are surrounded by a foreign population of whose language we do not possess a solitary word. Perhaps we long to leave the beaten track because in so doing we are less at a disadvantage, as compared with French or German wanderers, than we are when we visit cities which the whole world has agreed to admire. In such places as Rome, Venice, Naples, or Madrid, what tourist is so ill-equipped to appreciate the masterpieces of art which are concentrated in them as the average Englishman?

A horrible thought obtrudes itself. Can it be that English social life—our way of managing our loves,

our hatreds, our friendships — is so intolerable that the more sensitive members of our upper and middle classes have periodically to retire hurt, to lick their sores in solitude, like wounded animals? I prefer to believe that our wanderlust is due to the fact that part of almost every Englishman's make-up is a natural urge to walk the world. How odd we should think it if every village inn in England sheltered a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or a 'polonais'; if our wildest country roads were tramped by respectable Italian tourists with knapsacks on their shoulders and not a word of English on their tongues to help them through! I think most of those Englishmen who blithely foot it along the roads of other people's countries and behave as if the world belonged to them, would actively resent a reciprocal invasion of their own.

The odd thing is not that we should be hated, as we so frequently are, by our Continental neighbours, but that we should sometimes be tolerated and even liked by them. Money, I am convinced, makes very little difference in such matters. The big tip wins only an artificial smile, and sometimes not even that. Perhaps we are accepted and given a meed of grudging admiration because, with all our faults, we are seen to be instinctive travellers. Or perhaps those who dwell in lands of sunshine and blue skies sympathize with us in wishing to flee from our fogs. In any case we are indulged in our national propensity, and travel remains, for an Englishman, the recognized panacea for all the ills of soul and body. 'He has gone abroad to get over it' — the phrase is a *cliché*, which you may hear a dozen times in a week in London drawing-rooms.

Writers, painters, musicians and such-like 'get over' things, if they are young and fortunate enough to have any to get over, by harnessing their emotions and making them productive of works of art. We don't need to go abroad, except for a lark, and to take in new impressions. It was, therefore, with no secret anguish gnawing at my heart, that towards the end of a dark and dreary March I got down my Baedekers and opened my maps. Lack of sunshine, the alluring superiority of the English treasury-note to those of most other nations in Europe, the restlessness of Spring, and love of adventure were my only incentives. But whither should I go? France? Too near. Germany? I had only recently returned from a visit to Bavaria. Portugal? Too far and possibly not cheap enough. Italy? Yes, but just then I had no particular wish to encounter the inhabitants of Hampstead and of Chelsea *en vacances*. Spain? Possibly. But with pesetas at only thirty to the pound I was afraid my holiday might not last as long as I intended. While I was contemplating my half-packed suitcase and trying to make up my mind, Teresita 'blew in' and with her usual sisterly truculence decided me. I was to go to the Balearic Islands. There they were on the map — Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza — halfway between Africa and Spain. When I asked what she knew about them, all that she could tell me was that she had heard they were cheap and felt convinced that they were beautiful. 'Go along and see,' she said. 'And if you like them, I'll join you.'

II

I never feel that I have really begun the voyage to 'abroad' until I have safely left Paris a good way behind me. On this occasion Paris seemed uninviting and I was more than usually glad to leave it. Alas! as the train steamed south, it grew colder and colder. At Toulouse I was turned out and had to wait for an hour in an icy wind until the Narbonne express appeared. The platform, lit by the pallid glare of the arc lamps, was as full of soldiers as if the war were still in full blast. Tall, pale-faced, and supercilious officers in *pince-nez* paced up and down with rather homely wives; bearded merchants guarded important-looking baggage; groups of *piou-pious* laughed and joked. There were also sundry examples of the thin, hatchet-faced type of young Parisian, rather too flashily dressed and in every case accompanied by a lady with a mauve complexion and scarlet lips, who tried in vain, in such adverse conditions, to continue looking as if she had stepped out of the pages of some fashionable erotic novel. Oh, *l'amour*! Everybody's nose was adorned with a dewdrop, everybody — except the little soldiers — felt and looked as bleak as a brick wall. At last the *rapide* pounced into the station in the wake of a huge black throbbing engine that looked really villainous. It gave the impression that it was going to dash on into the perfectly harmless night and do it a mischief. I climbed up into a third-class *wagon* and sat in the corridor on the top of my upturned suitcase, surrounded by snoring workmen and stertorous old wives clutching the bundles and packages that rested on their knees. This really *was* an express, and we roared

our way to Narbonne in little more than an hour. Here another change, this time into an empty third-class carriage where I could lie down and sleep.

Port-Bou, the Spanish frontier-town, is one of the nastiest of such plague-spots that I know. Frontier stations seem to be erected chiefly for the purpose of harassing exhausted wanderers in the small hours of the morning in order to soothe the *amour-propre* of the countries concerned. When I last entered Port-Bou, the aged thief at the *arrendataria* handed me her entire collection of worthless leaden pesetas in exchange for a fifty-franc note. She did not give me one single solitary good coin. I went to look for her, but she was no longer in her accustomed spot. Her successor in theft was a smiling gentleman in an apron who lured me into the station restaurant and fleeced me mercilessly for a cup of vile *café au lait*. If one could only get one's own back from these frontier-station sharks! Alas, the traveller is powerless and, as a rule, too cold and exhausted even to think of combat.

The train ambled into Barcelona rather more briskly than on my previous visit to that imposing city, which took place in the year before the war. *En route* there were evidences of prosperity — new and ugly red-brick stations, new factories and workmen's dwellings. It was my first intimation that Spain is one of the countries which has done well out of the war, and gone forward and not backward in the past ten years. The Scotch mist, by the time we reached Gerona, had turned to a fine, persistent rain, and the whole landscape looked rain-soaked and melancholy. When we arrived at the terminus and I emerged from the squalid, swarming railway

station and saw the coffee kiosques and the noisy yellow tram-cars, which — with the four-days' beards of the railway porters and the palm trees — are the first things which strike one in Barcelona, my heart sank. I hadn't come all that way to see a great big, rainy, southern Birmingham. The dust in the vast new boulevards, superb in their hideousness, had been turned into a grey adhesive paste which stuck relentlessly to one's shoes. I boarded a tram heading for the Plaza de Cataluna, found a café there and had a dismal breakfast. And then, while I was engaged in trying to teach myself a word or two of the language by reading the newspaper which the waiter had brought me, suddenly the sun came out. It did not so much come out as break out. With one miraculous, triumphant gesture it burst the veil of rain and mist and turned the damp but now well-washed town into a sparkling, joyous capital. I expected the waiters to throw their little tin salvers into the air and burst out singing. Instead, the hundreds of little birds in the cages of the bird fanciers outside on the Rambla started chirping for joy. Colour came back to the flowers of the flower-sellers: colour came back to everything. I hastily got up and renewed my acquaintance with the great, vivid, vigorous city that I remembered so well. I think few great towns in Europe contrive to be rich and prosperous, and at the same time picturesque, so successfully as Barcelona. I thought of Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool as I strolled down the crowded Rambla towards the docks, and shuddered. Barcelona has none of the air of a provincial town. The claims of Catalonia to autonomy seem to me on

historical grounds to be a trifle thin, but there is no doubt whatever about Barcelona's claim to be a capital city. It is as original as Paris, London or Munich. It has its own 'types,' its own cabaret artists, its own songs, styles of dress and of feminine beauty, its own styles of architecture, its own culture and atmosphere. It produces so much that it can afford to borrow as freely as it pleases. Its Ramblas are as characteristic as Bond Street; far more so than the modern American thoroughfare into which Londoners have allowed Regent Street — once the most beautiful of all their streets — to be transformed. There is a briskness in the air of Barcelona which is heady; and its spacious new boulevards, ugly as the architecture of some of them may be, are curiously exhilarating. Of palace hotels of the Ritz-Carlton type it can claim at least one specimen which for fantastic sumptuousness would be renowned even in the United States.

Architecturally, modern Barcelona strikes one as being an ambitious failure. It has made prodigious attempts to achieve grandeur on original lines and succeeded only in achieving eccentricity on a grandiose scale. What posterity will make of the great new cathedral of the Sagrada Familia and of the jazz architecture in the Grazia quarter, Heaven only knows. The contemporary eye can at least detect and applaud the pluck and high spirits of the architects.

A dark vitality that has its root in elemental appetite which has so far escaped becoming entwined with and vitiated by intellectual processes, is perhaps the quality which most quickly makes its presence felt in Barcelona. In its least desirable

aspects, this is noticeable in its night life, and particularly in the notorious cabarets of the 'Parallelo' (Calle Marques del Duero). There the inspiration comes straight from the primary human impulse. The dancers express in their instinctive movements the procreative urge, with no interference from the brain. The exhibitions of nudity in the 'Parallelo' cabarets have about them something repulsive and animal which is absent from the jaded, calculating Paris *revue*. The attitude of the Catalans to grossness in their music-halls is impressive in its lack of squeamishness. Looking round the theatre one sees respectable married women with their husbands, boys, and small daughters, laughing heartily at acts of obscenity which a French or English *roué*, come on purpose to be shocked, would be unable to endure. The Catalan is too virile to flinch before facts. At bull-fights, when the bull is killed close to the occupants of the most expensive seats, it is considered contemptible for man or woman to make the slightest movement to avoid the spurt of warm blood which gushes from the dying animal.

On this particular visit to Barcelona, I did not wait to renew my acquaintance with the 'Parallelo,' or even to hear again that incomparable artist Raquel Meller, who was starring at the Novedades. In my anxiety to reach Mallorca I went off the same night in the Rey Jaime I, the very comfortable mail-boat of the Isleña Maritima Company. Luckily I had an upper berth and slept peacefully. I awoke with the sunshine streaming in through my open porthole and looked out upon a line of reddish cliffs with mountains at the back of them. When I went on deck in an hour's time we were close in

shore. A few minutes later, after rounding a cape with a fort on it, we entered the great bay of Palma and steamed on towards the city, which lay ahead of us. On the left was the ancient lighthouse of the entrance to Porto-Pi, and the Castle of Bellver, rising proudly on the summit of a wooded hill.

Palma, with its two finest buildings — the Gothic Cathedral and the famous Lonja, or merchants' exchange — well in the foreground, looked exchanting in the early morning sunshine, as we rapidly drew near our moorings. On the quay a number of yellow carts with canvas awnings and basket-work sides were drawn up, together with the omnibuses from the hotels, and a crowd of porters in dirty blue overalls waited ready to dash on board and seize our luggage. My complete ignorance of Mallorca — ignorance unimpaired even by a study of guide-books — increased the thrill which one generally experiences in setting foot for the first time in a strange land. An elderly porter took possession of my suitcases. When I tried to explain to him (in phrases carefully extracted from a traveller's manual of conversational Castilian) that I wanted a cheap hotel, he nodded his head and trudged off rapidly along the dusty road.

III

Outside the Hôtel Alhambra, the porter stopped and pointed. The Alhambra is one of the best hotels in Palma and — for the present, at any rate — it was not for me. I shook my head. With a shrug he resumed possession of my suitcases and crossing the road entered a house immediately op-

posite the hotel, ascended a flight of stone steps and rang the bell outside a comely door of dark walnut wood. The door was opened by a large and sombre woman, with dark hair and pallid cheeks. The porter explained me to her at great length. She looked at me and at my luggage. Finally she opened the door and led me into what I could only suppose was her own bedroom. I gathered that I might wash myself in the tin basin, and sit down until another room had been prepared for me. The house to which I had been brought turned out to be a primitive *pension* or *casa de huéspedes*. It was very old. The rooms were lofty, with great black beams across the whitewashed ceiling. The larger doors were all of walnut, with exceedingly beautiful brass fittings, elaborately chased. The smaller doors, as in Italian houses, were flat with the wall and painted the same colour, so that people emerging from them gave one a shock, as if they had suddenly burst out of a secret room. My fellow guests were a soldier, three very jolly young men — one of whom, the licensed humourist, wore horn-rimmed spectacles and resembled Harold Lloyd, the movie star — and a severe mother with two over-chaperoned daughters. Other people sometimes drifted in at meal-times. All the rooms opened out of the central living-room, in which, as is usually the case in Mallorquin houses, artificial light was perpetually necessary even on the brightest day. It was a queer little world into which to find one's self suddenly precipitated, and I regretted my ignorance of Catalan, which prevented me from making friends with the boy with the horn spectacles and with the landlady's two exceedingly pretty daughters. The

food, of its kind, was excellent. There was usually a rice dish to start with, a mound of brown rice, soaked in oil, plentifully studded with chicken's livers, portions of *langosta* and other oddments. I got to like this, for I have long since overcome my British prejudices against oil; but no amount of practice quite reconciled me to the Mallorquin fishes. I am one of those who eats bravely what is set before him in foreign countries, not doubting for an instant that, if strange to eye and taste, the native food may have its peculiar virtues. But courage and good will did not suffice to get me on good terms with the tough and tasteless fishes which were all I ever sampled on the island. Again, habit could never reconcile me to the Mallorquin breakfast — a bowl of milk with a dash of coffee in it, and a great, squashy, indigestible *brioche*, slightly powdered with sugar. Teresita, when she at last responded to my invitation and dragged herself away from the flesh-pots of Madrid, invented a much more heartening meal — three raw eggs whipped up with a liqueur-glass of brandy, followed by a cup of black coffee — and this, for the last half of my stay in the islands, took the place of the hateful *brioche*. One great virtue my *casa de huéspedes* had over all the other places in Mallorca which sheltered me, always excepting the Hôtel Turista at Deya, and that was that it provided a really drinkable table wine. This rather resembled a very thin, tawny port, and was much more palatable than the rough and searching wines of North Spain, or the acid red Mallorquin wine, like bad red Rioja, which elsewhere was all that one could get. On the whole, the Señora's queer household had its points, and

if the sanitary arrangements of the establishment had been as good as the cooking and the company I should not have fled from her as quickly as I did.

Palma is not a city which is likely for very long to retain the affections of any but the untravelled. The older parts of it, enclosed a generation ago in mediæval walls, are picturesque, as are most Mediterranean towns of similar antiquity. Some of the narrow, stone-paved streets, lined with the palaces of the island aristocracy, with long, open galleries under their projecting eaves, and cool, spacious courtyards, are very attractive. But for colour and movement, the Plaza Mayor in the upper town, reached from the modern Borne and Rambla boulevards by flights of shallow steps, always seemed to me the most diverting part of Palma. Here the market is held every morning. The fishermen and the peasants from the country round bring in their wares, over which the thrifty housewives haggle and chatter. The whole scene is vivacious and agreeable. Soldiers in greenish-yellow uniforms, with hats of black patent leather shaped rather like inverted dustpans, stalk up and down impressively; civil guards even more splendidly arrayed glance from right to left and twirl their moustaches, while the crowds of black-clothed women, with black *mantillas* or *rebozillos* (handkerchiefs) on their heads, move about among the stalls with their big baskets. The fish offered for sale are of many varieties. There is salmonetta, a kind of red mullet, which looks all right but has no taste and is full of bones; there is tunny, a huge blue creature from eight to ten feet long, with dark-red flesh; morena, which rather resembles an eel; cuttlefish and octo-

pus, which yield only to the sharpest teeth and taste like india-rubber; and many kinds of smaller fish, most of which are delightful to look at and unpleasant to eat. The butchers' stalls are interesting because the meat is cut into small, elegantly shaped portions, which bear no resemblance to our English shoulders, legs, sirloins, and saddles, and can only be identified by the expert. Oranges, each with a leaf attached to the stalk, were always plentiful, but were rather disappointing in quality. Perhaps the best of the crop is exported.

Architecturally the most important buildings in Palma, and, indeed, in the whole of the Balearic Islands, are the great Gothic Cathedral and the Lonja, the merchants' exchange, from which, in the days of the town's greatest prosperity, most of the trade of the Mediterranean was controlled. It now houses a few indifferent pictures, and looks as if it would soon fall into complete disrepair. The cathedral, which presents a noble appearance from the harbour with its pinnacled towers and flying buttresses, was begun by Don Jaime I in 1232, immediately after his conquest of Mallorca, and completed (with the exception of the western façade, which is modern and looks it) in 1601.

The Mallorquins appear to take no interest whatever in their ancient buildings, and even show an active delight in pulling them down and destroying them. Many remains of the ancient civilizations, Roman, Greek, Punic, Moorish, which have at different periods imposed themselves on these lovely islands, are still to be found by those who take the trouble to look for them. But Mallorca can boast no adequate museum, and objects of beauty and

historic interest which come to light invariably find their way into private hands and disappear. A few generations ago, most of the island was owned by less than a dozen great families, descendants of the warriors who accompanied Rey Jaime I on the expedition which drove the Moors from Mallorca in 1229. These had magnificent country houses which they filled with pictures and art treasures, and equally splendid palaces in the capital. But the prosperous days of the *Butifarras*, the 'big sausages,' of Mallorca are now over; the great properties have nearly all changed hands, and the art treasures are mostly dispersed. All traces of the old patriarchal life of the island will soon have gone for ever. The Mallorca of to-day contains its full quota of profiteers and parvenus. The island did well during the war, and is determined to do better. And so rich and prosperous is Palma now become, and so determined is it at all costs to expand, that it has swept away its massive mediæval ramparts and pushed its tram-lines out in all directions. No doubt it aspires to become a second Barcelona. The Mallorquins are active, industrious, honest, clean, and frugal people, but, as far as a stranger could tell, the only two outlets for their activities are religion and commerce. There is only one religion in the island and I doubt whether the average Mallorquin has ever heard that other forms of Christianity than Catholicism exist. In Palma there are forty-eight churches, no less, and the principal excitements of the year centre in the *fiestas*, when the band plays, the saints are taken out and given an airing and the inhabitants wear their best clothes and endeavour to be frivolous. The sporting in-

stinct seems to have been largely left out of the Mallorquin make-up. They do not shoot or hunt. Occasionally young ladies of the best society divert themselves by netting thrushes; and in the country villages, when an eagle has been snared in the mountains, it is tied by its feet in some public place and the inhabitants derive a few days' amusement from torturing it until it dies. Sea-gulls, also, are employed for this diversion. Football is beginning to be played, and most of the larger towns boast a team of 'futbolistas.' To judge from a match that I witnessed, however, their ideas of the game are still sketchy. When the referee gave a decision against the home team, it promptly struck. Advancing towards the onlookers with dramatic gestures, waving hands and contemptuously-shrugged shoulders, it just wouldn't play; and to get the 'futbolistas' of the Club of King Alfonso to function once more required at least ten minutes of coaxing and discussion.

I think Palma would be more likeable if it were a little naughtier, a little less repellently respectable. The upper classes appear to live entirely in their dark limestone houses. Their womenfolk occasionally emerge and are driven in tightly closed carriages to see the world for half an hour or so, or to attend midday Mass. The men, no doubt, spend their evenings at the various clubs with which the place abounds. The poorer people have the advantage of living on their doorsteps. Their rooms they hermetically seal, so that neither light nor air may penetrate. There is only one decent café in the town, and as far as I could gather it was not considered quite respectable for a woman to be seen in

it. (For a woman to smoke in a café or hotel was to offer a grave affront to public morals, as I discovered from the dark scowls of disgust which were levelled at the perfectly indifferent Teresita.) Gambling used until recently to be a favourite pastime in Palma, and enormous club-houses have been built from the profits accruing from this form of amusement. But a Liberal Government recently came into power and suppressed the sinful habit, with the result that at the time of my visit the principal club was faced with ruin.

Since it is dull, respectable, virtuous, provincial, and second-rate, and doesn't approve of or cultivate the arts, Palma forms a perfect home from home for middle-aged English ladies grown weary of hydropathic establishments, for superannuated colonels and their womenfolk, elderly public schoolmasters and retired officials. The climate is perfect, and to judge by the incredible age of some of the English visitors and residents, it is hardly possible to die on the island. There is an 'English colony' at El Terreno, a pleasant suburb overlooking the harbour, with, I believe, a golf course and a tennis club. There is certainly a circulating library, presided over, at the time of my visit, by a charming couple who did much to make the English visitors' stay agreeable.

Perhaps I have been unjust to Palma, but how can one be fair to a town in which one has been forced, entirely against one's will, to stay for four weeks instead of four days? Teresita, who had promised to join me, neither turned up, nor did she indicate when I might expect her, nor did she give me an address to which I could send an indignant

telegram. The result was that, instead of exploring the island, I had to remain in the hot and dusty capital. As the days went on, the defects of Palma assumed monstrous proportions. The roofs of the town are flat and on nearly all of them there is a fowl-run. From three o'clock in the morning onwards, its cocks crew, relentlessly, with damnable iteration. The supply of Tauchnitz novels in the book shop appeared to be limited to the works of Charlotte M. Yonge and Helen Mathers. When the weather was dry, one got caught in dust storms. When it was wet, the dust — as in Barcelona — formed a thick grey paste upon one's shoes. No wonder the bootblacks were numerous and hung round the cafés like fishes round a sewer, waiting to pounce upon the newcomers. To do the bootblacks justice, they were artists at their job, and not extortionate. In the evenings the only sensible form of amusement was to stay indoors and read an improving book. There were numerous cinemas, a music-hall (the Teatro Lirico), and also the Teatro Principal, facing the Grand Hotel, but the entertainment provided by them was to the last degree mediocre. In the cafés one could sit and try to read the local papers, or, aided by rather poisonous drinks, one could think one's melancholy thoughts. It was not enlivening, and by the time Teresita arrived and released me from prison, I was a neurasthenic wreck.

IV

Teresita decided to be ill in the comic hotel to which the majority of English and American visitors immediately betake themselves. I would not men-

tion the name of this establishment for worlds. In retrospect I have an odd affection for it. It was built about twenty years ago, and is ugly and pretentious almost beyond belief. The comfort, the good cooking, and the cleanliness so characteristic of the smaller hotels in Mallorca are entirely absent from Hotel X.[1] Instead, you can buy the 'Continental Daily Mail' in the manager's office and can gaze at a lift which hardly ever works. The place is run by a sad-looking Austrian, but the most responsible official is the diminutive Austrian *portier*. He also is melancholy beyond belief. He sits behind his counter, in his brown frock-coat with the crossed keys in gold embroidered upon the lapels, and gazes upon the guests with a world of sympathy for them expressed in his dark-brown eyes. I remember once seeing Alfred Lester in a music-hall sketch in which he appeared as a waiter in an unprosperous restaurant. Lester's lugubrious commiseration with the solitary diner resembled the *portier's* sympathy for the guests who complained to him. Not that this hotel was unprosperous — far from it. It was crowded, and its prices the highest in the island. It was the hotel itself which was beyond hope. Nothing ever worked in it. The water-closets were perpetually waterless. The lift was a chronic invalid. The lavatories were invariably bereft of soap and towels. The long, characterless meals, served in a vast dining-room decorated with huge oil paintings depicting beauty spots on the island, gave people indigestion and induced ill-temper. As for the

[1] The 'Hotel X' has been improved out of all recognition since these lines were written, and is now a comfortable and well-managed house.

drawing-room and the writing-room, they had to be seen to be believed. Twenty years ago they had been decorated in the vilest German *art nouveau* style, since when, presumably, nothing whatever had been done to them. The hotel is in the noisiest and stuffiest part of the town, but because it labels itself 'first-class,' the English and American tourists nearly always make for it. Teresita, when she was well enough to come downstairs and see the fun, spent most of her days in one of the armchairs outside the hotel's front door, giggling helplessly. She found a ravishingly good-looking kitchen-boy called Pedro, and a large, plump profiteer's wife with *real* elastic-sided boots, whose ailments were convulsing, and a small urchin who gazed at her with silent adoration and blushed when he received a penny. When the majestic gentleman with the superb beard, who looked like a French nobleman and was, I believe, a Greek *maquereau*, paused with one patent-leather-covered foot upon the step of his wife's Hispano-Suiza and slowly spat over his shoulder into the street, Teresita's joy was complete. Things come to Teresita; she does not go to them. I never met any one who did less 'sightseeing' and yet saw more.

In the course of casual shopping expeditions we contrived to explore the churches of Santa Eulalia, San Francisco, and Monte Sion. San Francisco has very beautiful cloisters surrounding a peaceful garden, and the tomb of Ramon Lull is in one of the side chapels. Ramon Lull is the great Mallorquin saint and hero, and his cult is universal throughout the island. He flourished in the days of Rey Jaime, beginning life as a gay and fashionable young

soldier and courtier. Later he 'got religion' and developed into a student, traveller, politician and fervent missionary. In turn, in pursuit of knowledge and in the cause of religion, he visited France, Italy, North Africa, and, so it is believed, England. No doubt he found the study of magic not incompatible with his Christian principles, for there is a legend that he was a successful alchemist and that he sought in vain for the philosopher's stone, in England and in Paris. When he returned from his wanderings in Europe he devoted himself to preaching Christianity to the Mahometans of North Africa. Returning thence to his home in Mallorca, he founded a monastery at Miramar, a beautiful spot on the western coast of the island, intending to train a band of young men there to help him in his African mission. But his followers proved reluctant to face the difficulties and dangers of preaching the gospel in Africa, and Ramon Lull, now very old, went back alone to the field of his former labours. He was killed soon afterwards, but his body was recovered, brought back to Palma and buried in the church of San Francisco.

In the Iglesia del Hospital, to which we were led by enthusiastic acquaintances, is preserved Mallorca's most sacred object, the Crucifixion of La Sangre. The figure is dressed as to the lower limbs in an embroidered skirt of light blue silk richly jewelled, with a finely wrought silver girdle. A long swathe of dark hair depends from the head and extends along the left arm: the breast is covered by exotic flowers, which are constantly renewed by the devout. It is not a particularly beautiful piece of work, but the Mallorquins hold it in enormous

veneration, and all along the passage leading to it the walls are covered with naïve pictures representing the miracles which it has wrought.

As soon as Teresita could be persuaded to drag herself away from the rich humours of the Hotel X, we went out to the succursale of the establishment, a large red villa at El Terreno, which immediately overlooks the harbour. The inefficiency which characterized the hotel was even more noticeable at the Villa, but in the homelier surroundings it was less annoying. Maria, the chambermaid, a big, smiling creature, immediately took both Teresita and myself to her capacious bosom. She would knock at our doors, shout 'Come een' (her one English phrase), and enter with loud, delighted chuckles. Our fellow guests — amiable retired colonels and their wives, wandering spinsters of independent means, and two honeymoon couples — had one noticeable weakness. They would insist on fighting the Great War over again. Their last mental process seemed to have taken place in August, 1914. Woe betide any unfortunate German visitor who dared to set foot in 'their' hotel! During our short stay we watched the awe-inspiring spectacle of the British Colony in action. A harmless and virtuous-looking German family, father, mother and daughter, appeared one day in the dining-room of the Villa and took their seats at a table in the middle of the room. In a flash the air was rent with the snort of the female British warhorse, and within forty-eight hours the Boche — his *moral* shattered — broke and fled.

It was a pleasant place, and for old people it must have been a paradise. A steep path, ending in

a flight of steps, led down to the water's edge. The bathing was excellent, and in the morning, before breakfast, we descended in dressing-gowns, with towels round our necks and *alpagartas* on our feet, to take our dip. The sun always shone, and there was often a slight, delicate haze over the water. I used to lie on my back, too warm and comfortable and lazy to swim, and look up at the wooded hills behind the hotel and reflect upon the indignity of labour. After breakfast, the temptations to idleness were many. The terrace in front of the hotel was well supplied with deck-chairs and little tables, and the view over the harbour was superb. Most of the things which it occurred to one to do seemed less attractive than to stay where one was.

Teresita, however, had occasional fits of energy. Near to the hotel, but down by the water's edge, was a piece of land, enclosed by a crumbling stone wall with a great gateway in the midst of it. It was just the sort of place which children love to explore, and Teresita was determined to get into it. She swarmed up the wall like a monkey and took a flying leap into the long grass on the other side, while I with difficulty followed. After we had explored this enclosed and tangled garden, she climbed on to the wall again and ran along the top of it with her mane of dark-brown hair flying in the wind. She was wearing a terra-cotta-coloured dress, and perhaps this caught the attention of the people on the hotel terrace. In any case, I saw a group of them watching intently, and one of them had even brought a telescope to bear upon her. Alas, they witnessed our discomfiture. When Teresita had climbed down from the wall and rejoined me, we

looked round and saw a heavy gentleman in his shirt-sleeves, with black moustaches bristling, coming whiffling towards us through the long grass. His eyes flashed and he snorted like an infuriated bull. Teresita glanced at him with round eyes and a brilliant imitation of a schoolgirl simper, which seemed to goad him into a fresh paroxysm of rage. We gathered after a time that we were trespassing in the sacred back-garden of the Police Barracks. Teresita, assembling her Catalan, inquired if he would show us the way out.

He would do no such thing.

'*Défense!*' he shouted. '*Défense!*' That, no doubt, was his only word of French.

'I wasn't going to!' retorted Teresita, highly shocked.

The policeman's anger and his impotence — because it was clear that he could think of no way of punishing us, and we could not understand his invective — were beginning to undermine our gravity, so wishing him '*Buenas tardes*' we beat a retreat and scrambled over the wall the way we had come. The group of spectators on the terrace of the hotel gazed down on us in shocked surprise while the policeman continued to yell abusively. It was an ignominious moment. 'Teresita,' I said severely, 'if you are well enough to risk breaking your neck by running about on the tops of walls, you are well enough to explore the island. We start to-morrow.' And despite the difficulty which Teresita found in extricating herself from Maria's embraces, despite the seductive smiles of Miguel, the head waiter, start we did.

V

The charm of Mallorca, apart from its exquisite climate and its air of ease, prosperity, and peace, lies chiefly in the rare beauty of its coast-line. Hills to the south and east, and mountains to the north and west, interpose between the sea and the fertile plain which forms the centre of the island. All round the sea coast there are exquisite bays and *calas* (inlets), many of which are best explored by boat. What is generally considered to be the most beautiful stretch of coast-line is on the northwest, and the drive from Palma to Miramar and Soller is an excursion which the least energetic visitor to the Balearic Islands can scarcely afford to miss. A rather longer tour can be made by going first to Andraitx, then, striking northward, to Estallenchs and Bañalbufar, along a road sliced out of the cliff, with on one side the sea a glittering blue expanse hundreds of feet below and on the other the mountains rising sheer into the sky. Andraitx, a pleasant little town surrounded by orchards, lies on the slopes of a semi-circle of tree-clad hills, overlooking its little port which is four or five miles distant. On leaving it, one climbs up into a deserted mountainous country of bare cliffs and steep ravines, where the olive and fig tree give way to the Aleppo pine, and after some hours' walking one strikes the northern coast. The first village reached is Estallenchs, and four miles farther on is Bañalbufar, famous for its malvasia, one of the best of the Mallorquin wines. The land here is cultivated in a series of terraces which form a kind of giant staircase to the water's edge. The Baronia of Bañalbufar, a fine old castle belonging to the Conde de Sallent, stands in

a superb situation and is a good example of a Mallorquin demesne. After Bañalbufar one can only follow the coast-line on foot. The *carretera* makes a détour and turns inland to Esporlas, where it joins the main road from Palma to Valldemosa. The coast is rejoined at Miramar, a few kilometres beyond Valldemosa.

Valldemosa stands at the head of a singularly beautiful valley. From the terrace outside the church of the old Carthusian monastery, one sees through a great stone archway, stretching out far away below, the central plain of Mallorca. Here and there a village on a low hill stands grouped round its church, an island of masonry in a grey-green sea of olive trees. It was in the monastery at Valldemosa, from which the monks had been ejected in 1835, that Georges Sand and Chopin, in the winter of 1838, were thankful to be able to rent 'three rooms and a garden full of oranges and lemons for thirty-five francs a year.' Palma had received them anything but kindly, for then, as now, it looked askance at irregularly mated couples. Although Valldemosa provided them with a roof over their heads, the inhabitants could not refrain from expressing virtuous indignation, and after they had been there some time the unfortunate couple were subjected to 'rough music' which played havoc with the nervous system of the consumptive composer. The monastery buildings, apart from the church, consist of a series of small stone houses overlooking the valley. They are now owned by residents of Palma who go there for the summer holidays. The gardens attached to them are singularly lovely, and the whole place, with its superb situation, has an unforgettable beauty.

I shall never forget the night I spent at Valldemosa. It was ice-cold after the burning day, and a full moon bathed the whole scene in silver radiance and cast deep black shadows. It was like the setting for some unimaginably beautiful ballet. I stood in the little square outside the massive façade of the Carthusian church, listening to the sound of the mountain streams gurgling down the valley and to the song of the nightingale. It was one of those moments, quite indescribable in their emotional effect, which cannot be achieved by taking thought. Does not ecstasy come upon you always when you least expect it?

Miramar, where all that now remains of Ramon Lull's monastery is a small chapel, is one of the show places of Mallorca. It is a large and beautiful estate on the wooded slopes of the mountains, and belongs to the family of the Austrian Archduke Ludwig Salvator, who made a life study of the Balearic Islands and their inhabitants, and wrote the standard work on the subject, 'Die Baleares in Wort und Bild geschildert.' Unfortunately, he had a bad habit of 'embellishing' the already sufficiently entrancing landscape, by erecting imitation Moorish towers as gazebos for the tourists. From Miramar through Deya to the town of Soller, the road runs *en Corniche* through scenery which of its kind is as exquisite as any one could wish for. This stretch of rocky, wooded coast is, indeed, the beaten track for visitors, but beaten tracks are not to be despised. Deya, six miles from Miramar, is an enchanting little town built on a hill, with mountains forming a semicircle round it. The inn, the Hôtel Turista, is extremely comfortable, the food excellent and the

table wine the best I ever tasted in the island. The *fondista* began life as coachman to a wealthy merchant in Buenos Ayres, to whom his wife was cook, and he receives his guests with the most distinguished courtesy imaginable.

After Deya the road turns to the south, and after a sharp bend one sees the town of Soller lying at one's feet in a wide green valley. At the head of this valley rises a gigantic wall of mountains, culminating, in the north, in the great peak of Puig Mayor. When the sun begins to set, its beams strike the bare rock of the mountain-tops, bathing them in a glow of scarlet. It would be hard to imagine a more beautiful sight.

Soller is a pleasant, shady little town standing in the middle of a vast, delicious orchard. A mountain torrent runs through the middle of it, and the whole valley is made musical by the sound of innumerable tiny streams. It is connected with Palma by railway, and the stone viaduct, the Viaducto de Monreal, which carries the train across a ravine just above the town, is a source of extraordinary pride to the Mallorquins. I doubt whether even the great cathedral of Palma is more often photographed by them or more sincerely admired than this undistinguished piece of engineering. All races have their romantic illusions, and the Mallorquins — bless their hearts — have not yet found out 'Progress.' The port of Soller is a blue lagoon, almost landlocked. It is three miles from the town, with which it is connected by an electric tram. Before the war it had a certain amount of trade with Cette, but this seems to have died out. French, however, remains a useful language in the town and most of the shop-

keepers can understand it. There are two fairly good hotels in Soller, the Hôtel Marina and the Station Hotel. The place is a recognized tourist resort and lays itself out, in a simple kind of way, to please the visitor and make him comfortable. It is in the midst of the finest scenery in the island, and the excursions to be made from it are numerous, the most famous being those to the Gorch Blau, the Monastery of Lluch, the Torrente de Pareys (best reached by boat) and the ascent of Puig Mayor.

Now that Mallorca has been discovered by English people Soller will doubtless develop very rapidly. It is already much more sophisticated, much less purely 'native' than any other place in the island, with the exception of Palma. It still, however, holds on May 11th its special *fiesta* to celebrate the anniversary of the victory of the citizens of Soller over Ochiali and a mixed army of Turks and Moors, in the year 1561. Boys and girls in fancy dress take part in the pageant together with their elders, and there is an amusing sham fight in which men in Moorish costume seize and carry off the women, but allow themselves eventually to be defeated by the Christians. There is also a great religious ceremony and procession in which the same image of the Virgin that was mutilated by the Moorish scimitars in 1561 is carried from the parish church to the oratory of the hospital. On the day of the *fiesta* the town is crammed with visitors from Palma from which it is only an hour's journey by the train.

The towns and villages in the centre of Mallorca are for the most part not worth a visit. The majority of the churches seem to have been built at the

same date — the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century — and from precisely the same design. The houses as a rule are neither new nor old, and there is little to distinguish one place from another. Perhaps Manacor, near which are the famous Cuevas del Drach, holds the palm for dreariness, though in the distance its encircling ring of stone windmills looks picturesque. The excursion to the caves is one which only the most strong-minded visitor to Palma can resist. Your hotel-keeper almost hounds you to the station. I went obediently, though I do not like caves very much and still less do I like a railway journey of four hours, at the rate of about twelve miles an hour, in the heat of the day. The caves are near the sea, close to the tiny *plage* of Porto Cristo, and are worth a visit on account of the subterranean lake which, when illuminated by the flares of the guides, presents a mysterious and awe-inspiring spectacle. The acres of dripping stalactites I found less enthralling, and was glad to emerge from the stuffy atmosphere into the open air. Porto Cristo, though its hinterland is a grassy, treeless plain, which affords no shade from the burning sunshine, is in itself rather a jolly little place. The excitement of its day is watching the tourists eat their luncheon. Very strong-minded people proceed at once, after the meal, to drive to Arta, where there are still larger caves. For me, one cave *per diem* was sufficient, and I lay that night at Manacor in the Fonda Felip. It was not a good *fonda*. My hostess was dour and unsympathetic, I had nothing to read, and I was afflicted with loneliness and a sense of desolation. An adventure ought to have happened

to me, but none came. I thought of Teresita comfortably reading 'Back to Methusaleh' in the Tauchnitz edition, on the terrace at El Terreno, and marvelled at her wisdom in refusing to accompany me. Why go and see caves? Can't one shut one's eyes and imagine all the caves in the world, and all the underground lakes? The lake in the Cuevas del Drach, impressive as it was, was nothing to the one that I remember reading about in a story in the 'Boy's Own Paper,' at the age of ten! After dinner I went into a melancholy café, which turned out to be a club, and drank a fiery green Chartreuse. At ten I went to bed: at three the cocks crew.

Never mind; a new day: and with it escape, for ever, from Manacor! Arta proved to be a delightful little place, with a fine church and castle boldly situated on a hill above the town. After lunching at the Anticha Fonda Randa, where I made great friends with a telegraph clerk who spoke French, I set off on foot for the coast. Nearly all the towns in Mallorca lie back from the sea coast, and most are built on small hills which command a view of the countryside. No doubt this was important when the seas were infested with Corsairs, prone to land and pillage whenever the inhabitants were off their guard. The road led through the picturesque little town of Capdepera, which in Roman times was a strong fortress; thence it wound its way down the hillside, through groves of olives, to Cala Ratjada, a small fishing village and 'bathing station.' This place is crowded in the summer months by visitors from Palma, and is increasing in size, but I believe it is not often visited by English people. I went there out of the season and stayed in the new and

comfortable inn, the C'as Bombu. I got the impression that visitors were neither expected nor welcomed before the month of July; and the Señora asked me suspiciously on my arrival how long I intended to stay. An air of mystery hung about the whole establishment. Why did all those good-looking young men go to sleep in the daytime and disappear at night? Was the place connected in some way with the famous Mallorquin millionaire, the king of the contraband trade, whose vast new villa stands upon the wooded hillside just above it? These are matters into which it would perhaps be tactless to inquire; but certain it is that visitors who arrive at this hotel out of the season, intending to stay a week or two, usually depart quickly after one night. The elderly peasant woman, dressed in a brown shawl and voluminous skirts, with a brown silk handkerchief at the back of her head, who acted as manageress was surly and disobliging and her charges excessive. However, the little *plage* was so alluring, and the walks through the woods behind the millionaire's villa were so delightful, that I insisted upon staying two nights. The weather was sunny and clear, though at night a chilly breeze came in from the sea. From the hill-top behind the hotel one could see the low red cliffs of Menorca, distant about thirty or forty miles, rising out of a turquoise sea.

On my return to Palma, I dislodged Teresita once again from her Tauchnitz novels and we set off in the dusty, overcrowded Ford 'bus for Alcudia, in the northeast of the island. Alcudia was once a strongly fortified Roman city, commanding the two great bays of Alcudia and Pollensa. Its Roman

walls still remain, outside the mediæval fortifications, and there are two small but fairly well-preserved Roman amphitheatres. We entered the little dusty town in great style, through a narrow stone gateway, and after traversing the narrow main street the 'bus drew up with a clatter before the inn. Here a smiling youth, very proud of his few words of English, came up and seized our light luggage. He belonged to the Hôtel Marina, a small inn at Alcudia Port, and had a Ford car waiting for us. The bay of Alcudia is a vast anchorage, often visited by the British fleet. The village of Alcudia Port consists of a row of fishermen's houses, a couple of inns and the barracks of the *carabinieri*. To the east stretch miles of mosquito-infested swamps, intersected by Roman and Moorish aqueducts, now mostly in disrepair. To the north the ground rises slightly. An old circular watch-tower stands upon a knoll on the northern side of the bay, which is still apparently in use. When I pushed my way into its dark interior one morning I was greeted with loud groans and the yapping of a dog. I struck a match and found one of the *carabinieri* half asleep upon a pile of straw, the dog keeping guard over him.

Beautiful as Alcudia undoubtedly was, and pleasant as we found the *fonda*, somehow neither Teresita nor myself felt that we could settle down there. Our landlord was an agreeable old gentleman, wedded to a battered felt hat, our rooms were clean, the cooking all that could be desired, and the company — a retired major and his wife — unusually pleasant. On the first floor lived another retired soldier, who was declared to be a distin-

guished ornithologist. He had not stirred from the village, so they said, for over four years. At the rival *fonda* there was a party of young women in tweed skirts and sensible shoes, whose acquaintance we happily did not make. They shouted remarks like 'Wasn't it perfectly *priceless? Did* you see!' to one another in clear, refined South Kensington voices; they carried sketching-blocks and water-colour paints; they went to bed at ten; they walked about the village with purposeful, possessive strides; they were plain. Teresita, on the other hand, may be said to be 'coloured,' albeit with art, and she has a particular detestation for the sort of South Kensington young women you meet in the winter at Swiss hotels, and do not expect to come across in Mallorca. 'It somehow isn't our place,' she said one afternoon, when we were exploring Alcudia. We were standing on the ramparts, with the town at our feet, in a position which gave us a magnificent view both of the bay of Alcudia and of the smaller and more beautiful bay of Pollensa. 'Let's go *there*,' she said suddenly, pointing to a line of white houses which were just visible in the far distance, fringing the smaller bay. We gazed at those little houses, and at the serrated edge of the range of craggy hills protecting them from the north, and something inside us both, an inner voice, told us quite distinctly that 'there' was the place for us. We made inquiries at the *fonda*. 'Puerto de Pollensa? No good. Nothing to see. Not worth going to.' All the same, we went.

VI

'*Es muy tranquilo acqui!*' observed the Argentine painter, as he seated himself in the rocking-chair outside the Hôtel Miramar, sipped his sherry and gazed across the bay at the line of mountains, growing dark now in the gathering twilight, which protected these *aquae dulces* from the onslaughts of the Mediterranean. A group of *faluchas*, fishermen's craft with masts sloping like *accents graves*, was moored close to the beach a hundred yards or so from where we sat; and further out, beyond the mole, a white yacht lay at anchor, gleaming ghostly in the fading light. All day the sun had burnt down upon us, with a dry, brilliant but supportable heat. Now the little breeze, always to be relied upon at sunset, was coming across the water — a breath from the sea which, even in summer-time, renders enchanting the Mallorcan night. It was the evening of our first arrival in the port of Pollensa. Don Juan told us that he had come to the place on a fortnight's visit to his master, a well-known Spanish painter who had made his home in the village. That was nine years ago. He had not left the island in the interval, and only stirred from Pollensa in the months of July and August, when he usually went up into the mountains. He was perfectly contented, the most contented man, I think, I have ever met. He had a little house facing the sea, had married a comfortable, phlegmatic wife who looked after him and it, and all day and every day he painted his beloved trees. For diversion, he would sometimes go out at night with Antonio, our host, in his motor-boat, to spear fish by the light of an acetylene flare.

'*Es muy tranquilo aqui!*' he murmured again, crossing his long legs. His eyes smiled behind his horn-rimmed spectacles.

As the days added themselves up into weeks, and I grew less and less inclined to tear myself away from this place which God had designed so tenderly and assuredly smiled upon after He had made it, I began to feel, like the Argentine, that I had found my anchorage. Although, as a rule, I am the most restless of travellers, perpetually on edge to see round the next corner, to cross the mountains and pass the frontiers, now, for once in a way, I just didn't want to stir. It was only the inexorable voice of Duty, many times reiterated through the post, which eventually dislodged me.

Our rooms were in a small house facing the bay, which served as an annexe to the Hôtel Miramar. The whitewashed walls of the sitting-room had been adorned with rough mural paintings by a Mallorquin artist who had once inhabited them. The place was bare and rather scantily furnished, but, like most of the houses in Mallorca, it was spotlessly clean. When I woke in the morning I used to jump out of bed and walk straight out of the house in my pyjamas to the end of the mole. There, leaving my clothes behind a lobster cage, I plunged into twelve feet of green translucent water — water so clear that I could discern the plants, like tufts of grass, growing on the sandy bottom. Life presented no economic difficulties. Were we not excellently lodged and fed for the sum of twenty-eight shillings a week each, an amount which even the laziest writer should be able to earn in a morning?

Our days quickly fell into a pleasant routine, only varied when we prevailed upon our host to take us out in his motor-boat. We bathed soon after seven, breakfasted, wrote our letters, and sat in the sun until midday. At noon the half-dozen foreigners met outside the *fonda* for the *apéritif*, and contrived, with a complicated vocabulary composed of English, French, a word or two of Italian, and a very little Spanish, to carry on very friendly and amusing conversations. At one we lunched. At two we went to our beds until six. At six we bathed again and called upon one another. Sometimes the painters showed us their work; on other days Baron Oscar — an aged, rather melancholy Dane — would drag us along to see his library, which consisted for the most part of works by Oscar Wilde, some of whose plays and poems he had translated into Danish. Our little group consisted of a Spaniard, an Argentine, four Danes, a Venezuelan, and ourselves, and we got on splendidly together. Indeed, I have always found that getting on with people is ever so much more a question of temperament than of nationality. I have never been able to dislike or distrust a likeable man on account either of his 'colour' or of his racial label. Nor, even at the time when my own race was one of the most detested in Europe, have I ever been 'larned' unpleasantly to be an Englishman. I believe this is a usual experience. Bring together half a dozen civilized people from any nations you please, and the chances are ten to one that they will prove to be men of good will.

We dined in the *fonda* at half-past eight or nine, and afterwards passed the lovely hours of the night

— usually till two or three in the morning — in talk, in strolling about the village by the light of a moon almost too bright and lovely to be true, in listening to the harsh love-songs of Matteo, the local bard; and in the dreaming of foolish but delightful dreams.

VII

To get to Puerto de Pollensa from Palma is no difficult matter. You must first find a place in the motor diligence, which starts from the Calle San Miguel, outside the church of that name, at three in the afternoon. Then for a couple of hours or so you will be bumped along the dusty *carretara*, passing en route the market town of Inca, until you dash dangerously into the narrow *calles* of Pollensa. Pollensa — the ancient Pollentia, the first Roman colony founded at Mallorca — is not a nice place, but it has a character of its own. It is the chief religious centre of the island: a very holy city, famed for its processions and its festivals. It is also one of the headquarters of the smuggling traffic, the principal Mallorquin industry. It lies in a hollow surrounded on three sides by precipitous mountains: on the fourth it is open to the sea. At Pollensa, if the traveller is not met by a horse and trap despatched from the *fonda*, he must either hire a Ford car from the garage of the diligence, or else set out on foot along a dusty road lined with tall pup cactuses, until, after an hour's hard walking, he reaches his destination. The village is a line of small fishermen's cottages built upon the shore of the bay of Pollensa. It stretches for about a mile. There are in it three small *fondas*, the Fonda

Marina, the Hôtel Miramar, and the Fonda del Puerto, each of which could, I suppose, accommodate about a dozen guests. Behind it are the jagged mountains which overhang Pollensa. On the left a ridge of rocky hills separates it from the northern coast. Immediately across the bay a rugged line of hills, thickly wooded on their lower slopes, shelters the village from the open sea. On the right is a great marshy plain, the marshes of Albufera, in the midst of which can be seen the roofs and towers of Alcudia — a fairy-like, fantastic city, dreaming in the sunshine.

It is perhaps the ever-changing beauty of the bay of Pollensa which is chiefly responsible for the spell which the little port casts over those who visit it. Who shall describe adequately the paradisal sparkling freshness of its dawns, the superb pageantry of its sunsets, when the supreme Artist uses colours unknown to any earthly palette? The reds, the greens, the blues, the purples, the deep greys and blacks of the evening sky and landscape blend in a scene of such surpassing loveliness that existence must for ever have a new meaning for those who have once gazed upon it.

The bay and the leagues of blue water immediately beyond its confines are much more familiar to the inhabitants of the village than is the dry land which stretches away behind their little houses. They face the sea, and live by it, and on it. Nearly every one in the village is engaged in the fishing industry — this is alleged really to be a blind for the smuggling trade — and most of them have a whole or part share in a *falucha*. Antonio, our host at the Hôtel Miramar, had had a small motor fixed

to his boat, and his greatest pleasure was to go out in it all day, or perhaps for a day and a night, exploring the caves and *calas* to the north and east. (Whether 'business' was sometimes combined with enjoyment upon these occasions, lending an extra thrill to his voyages, I was, of course, careful not to inquire.) He had a sad, lined face and the air of a kindly, sympathetic priest. His smile was whimsical and rather pathetic: and I think I never met an innkeeper with fewer commercial instincts. His dignity in his own house was perfect. Guests of whom he disapproved had a way of leaving rather quickly. With his thick dark hair, always perfectly brushed, his black trousers, and his striped shirt with his monogram beautifully embroidered upon the pocket in black silk, he made a distinguished and striking figure. On the days when he took us in his boat we would start from the mole at seven or eight in the morning, taking with us a hamper containing sardines and cold Spanish omelettes, cold cutlets, and an ample supply of wine, fruit, and brandy. Rounding the Punta da Avanzada immediately under the lighthouse, we would usually make first for the lovely Cala de Formentor, bathe from its sandy beach, and take our luncheon and our siesta under the trees of the green, deserted woods which fringe the bay. Then, afterwards, we would steer on towards the Cabo de Formentor, the northernmost cape of the island, hugging the towering wall of cliffs and putting in at every tiny cove or inlet to talk to the fishermen at anchor in their *faluchas*, give them drinks of our brandy and accept perhaps a mouthful of fried fish and a glass of wine in return. The fishermen of

Pollensa are excellent cooks, and as they work most of the night, they eat or sleep most of the day. Before every meal the captain — usually a picturesque figure in rough canvas trousers, with a wide straw sombrero kept on by an elastic band under the chin — bows his head and says grace, while the crew bless themselves devoutly. The splendid Cape of Formentor is the farthest point which can be comfortably reached from Pollensa in a day. From the cove beneath the lighthouse we used regretfully to begin our homeward voyage. What bliss it was to lie full-length on one's back, to look up at the azure sky and at the frowning cliffs, and to watch the astonishing gymnastic feats of the wild goats as they scrambled about at a dizzy height, upon the very edge of the precipice! Antonio would stand up in the stern of the boat, with one hand on the tiller, the other holding his inevitable fishing-line, his eyes fixed upon the horizon. As we rounded once more the Punta da Avanzada and entered the tranquil waters of Pollensa Bay, the evening shadows would envelop us, and even Ivan Opffer, the great Dane, would for once be silent.

VIII

Our life wasn't, of course, all lotus-eating. Some of us occasionally did some work. Ivan, who was supposed to be illustrating his father's weekly articles, made several drawings, including two of myself, and certainly he decorated the marble tables of the *fonda* with some very clever caricatures. I think I wrote a couple of chapters of a novel and one or two stories. And certainly I thought a great deal about writing. Indeed, I have

never before been so filled with bright ideas and with such firm intentions of setting them down upon paper. But Mallorca is a leisurely island; and is not contemplation nobler than action? Besides, there was the sea and the sun to-day: for the other things was there not, invariably, to-morrow?

Teresita spent her days investigating the inhabitants, talking to the village goats, making friends with the village babies and learning to speak Mallorquin. One of her attached friends was an ancient priest on holiday. He was an enthusiastic amateur photographer and showed her innumerable photographs of the island, through a thing which in my youth I used to call a 'stethoscope.' I believe its real name is stereoscope. He was a dear old man, and in his holiday suit of blue canvas and his *alpagartas* there was nothing about him to indicate his profession. Another favourite was Antonio's elder brother, the Alcalde of Pollensa who frequently visited the inn. He was a shrewd old fisherman with a great fund of good-humour and small twinkling eyes. He had allowed himself to be appointed Alcalde on the strict understanding that during his year of office every one should be allowed to do precisely as he pleased. His gambling habits and those of his friends were of long standing, and he declined to have them interfered with by the Government. 'He can't read print,' observed Don Ramon, 'but he read the weather like a book.' If Puerto de Pollensa could be taken as an example of the world under Anarchy, I should become an anarchist to-morrow. The people are honest, trustful, unsuspicious. They are so honest that it is almost impossible to throw anything

away. I remember being accosted in the Borne at Palma by a native of the village, who rushed up to me with a brown-paper parcel containing a pair of socks which I had purposely left behind me in a cupboard! One can leave large sums of money lying about with perfect impunity. There are no locks on the doors. You go to bed when you please, get up when you will, and drink when you like, helping yourself if the maids at the *fonda* have gone to bed.

One of the great characters of the village was Don Ramon, secretary to the Posito de Pescadores, the fishermen's coöperative society, and citizen of the world. Ramon, a round-faced, brown-eyed little man, dressed in the usual blue canvas clothes, except on horrifying occasions when he attired himself in a bright brown Parisian *complet*, pink shirt and yellow boots, for the purpose of going to Palma, had been born in Venezuela, and educated first in North America at a military school, and subsequently in Paris and in Germany. He spoke English, French, German, and Spanish — all, I imagine, equally badly. He had drifted to Mallorca at the beginning of the war, and finding Puerto de Pollensa, had succumbed soon enough to its insidious tranquillity. He was very popular with the fishermen, and managed all their buying and selling for them. His coöperative society was a source of immense pride to him, and he enjoyed nothing better than showing people over its pleasant white-washed headquarters, in part of which he had established a small marine museum. As he was one of the few inhabitants of the village who could read or write, Ramon's position was one of considerable importance, and all problems that required the

attention of a man of learning were brought to him to be resolved. Whenever the British fleet anchored in Pollensa Bay, it was, of course, Ramon who took charge of the arrangements for entertaining the sailors and who acted as interpreter. His capacities for absorbing brandy knew no limit, so that he was well-equipped for the task of befriending shore parties. Business-like as he was, in a temperamental way of his own, Ramon had nevertheless all the Spaniard's vagueness about time. On one occasion he invited Teresita, 'Ivan the Terrible,' and myself to walk across the hills to the tiny *cala* of San Vincente, and arranged with us to start at seven in the morning, to avoid the heat of the sun. But at seven he was busy, at eight he 'would be ready in half an hour,' at nine he 'couldn't start yet.' It was not until the Great Dane began shouting at him outside his window in the 'Posito de Pescadores' and refused to go away, that he was eventually dislodged.

'Ramon, you lousy-livered son of a lobster, come out of it! Aren't you the laziest guy that ever lived? Get a move on, bo, we've waited three hours' — and so on. Dear Ivan had at times the awful heartiness of the world's worst curate, and I rather sympathized with Ramon's rage. However, out of courtesy to Teresita, he did at last emerge, though in a condition of black fury, and led us over the rock-strewn hillside towards San Vincente. It was a steep climb, there was no trace of a path, and the undergrowth was sometimes very thick, but the scenery, as we began to descend the farther side of the intervening hill, was exquisite. Ramon strode ahead in his pink shirt, quivering with anger, while

Ivan mercilessly chaffed him. At any moment I thought there would be an explosion and the two would find themselves locked in a death-grapple. Much torn, very footsore, and extremely hot, we arrived at last at one of the most primitive and inaccessible hamlets in the island. At San Vincente there are three narrow inlets close to one another. A ruined castle crowns the hillside which separates the two narrower inlets; and on the shores of the broadest of the three coves is a huddle of stone huts and one new and garish stone villa. Behind, there stretches a beautiful wood, through which runs a very rough cart-track leading back to civilization. Drawn up on the beach were a number of *faluchas*, in the shadow of which sat a group of fishermen smoking cigarettes. Their six days' beards, swarthy features, and torn and dirty canvas trousers made them look exactly like a collection of pirates. Ramon led the way to a cottage on rising ground overlooking the cove, which he assured us was an inn. Outside it was a courtyard enclosed by a low mud wall and roofed with pieces of withered brushwood laid over a rough wooden trellis. While Ramon talked to the owner of the inn, a fat man whose clothes gaped in the most surprising places, revealing a skin as brown as that of his own goats, we sat ourselves on the small straw-bottomed stools which are characteristic of the island, and looked down at the little bay. Ramon's conversation went on and on and was accompanied by much gesticulation, and Ivan, who was hungry and parched with thirst, quickly grew impatient. He 'butted in,' demanding food and wine with irritating heartiness, and once again there was nearly a

fight. Ramon, trembling with fury, observed in broken English that he had come to San Vincente to talk 'beesness,' and not for the purpose of attending to Ivan's thirst. However, at last the woman of the house took pity on us, brought a jug of sour black wine, some rough bread and pieces of *sobre ansado*, the delicious orange-coloured sausage which is the great Mallorquin delicacy. We made an excellent meal, and the tension between Ivan and Ramon for the moment subsided. Later we looked about for a bathing-place, and chose the narrowest of the three *calas*, where between two walls of rock the waves rushed in and broke in a flurry of dazzling foam, over a beach of firm white sand. It was the most delicious surf-bathing that I have ever experienced, and quite exciting, owing to the force of the undertow. Once I was dragged off my feet by the receding water and should have been banged against the rocks had not the heavier Ivan caught my outstretched hand in time. For an hour or more we fought the waves, our naked bodies warm and tingling under the rough but exquisite caress of the white, glittering breakers. The sea treated us with a sort of menacing playfulness. It was in a kindly mood; but every now and then — just to remind us of what it could do if it liked — it made us fight for our lives.

Of all the sensual memories on which if I attain old age I shall be able to dwell, I doubt whether any will surpass in delight that of the perfect bathe. Certainly the recollection of that afternoon at San Vincente, spent in battling with the surf in radiant sunshine under a cloudless azure sky, is one that will remain with me until my death. We struggled

back over the hillside in the late afternoon, rather less energetically than on the outward journey, with Ramon, still speechless with annoyance, about a hundred yards ahead of us. It was not until two in the morning, after we had plied him with many brandies, that he became once more his usual genial self.

IX

'*Contrabandistas!*' exclaimed young Jaime one morning as he was driving me into Pollensa to catch the diligence for Palma. He grinned, and pointed with his whip. About fifty men, in groups of twos and threes, were strolling past us down the road, treading softly in their *alpagartas*. They looked like blameless labourers, proceeding to their jobs. But each had under his arm a long and innocent-looking brown-paper parcel.

To smoke tobacco which has paid duty is not at all the done thing in Mallorca. Smuggled tobacco is readily obtainable, for if the *contrabandistas* happen to be short of it, the natural inference is that the preventive men, the *carabinieri*, will be able to supply your wants. Only the Government is unable to get it.

One of the many charms of Puerto de Pollensa is that it quite escapes the corrupting influences of 'law and order.' Law and order seem, indeed, in a queer way, nearly always to bring crime and dishonesty in their train, but Puerto de Pollensa remains a shining advertisement of the blessings of anarchist communism. Taxes do not 'pay themselves' there. The people, as I have already observed, are nevertheless extraordinarily honest, in

their relations with strangers and with one another. The policeman and the army, two woebegone fellows with their carbines slung over their right shoulders and a perpetual thirst, are kept upon their best behaviour, as they exist purely on sufferance. Only two events within the last thirty years have disturbed the life of the village policeman. The first happened a long while ago. A crime of violence was committed outside the Fonda Marina, and the wife of the injured party, a foreigner, took the unheard-of course of invoking the aid of the law. But on that particular day, as ill-luck would have it, the policeman had sent his carbine to be mended, and since he could not function without a carbine, it had occurred to him that a day's fishing was indicated. When he returned late in the evening, on board Martinio's *falucha*, he was met upon the mole by a group of his outraged and derisive fellow citizens. It was years before he lifted up his head again. His *moral* was shattered. His *moral* was still by no means restored when the second event took place, which destroyed it completely. This tragedy happened just before my arrival; and the situation had not been resolved when I left.

As the result of one of those hateful combinations of circumstances which arise simply in order to plague a policeman's life, orders came through to our constable to arrest and imprison one Pépé. Pépé had committed a crime in the town of Pollensa, when much above himself with brandy, and the authorities at Pollensa decreed that he must be punished. And so one evening, with his carbine oiled and polished, and fear and trembling in his heart, the constable walked to the north end of the

village, and knocked at Pépé's door. Would Pépé come to the lock-up? — which meant would Pépé come and occupy the spare room in the policeman's official residence. Pépé was naturally indignant at the idea. For one thing, he did not like the south end of the village at all. It was far away from his lobster-pots; besides, he had quarrelled with the proprietor of the Fonda del Puerto — to which the southern half of the village resorted; his wife, also, would make a fuss about it. In short, he declined.

'But you m-m-*must* come!' stuttered the policeman. 'Oh, must I?' said Pépé. 'Very well, take me.' With that Pépé gave our friend the *guardia civil* a very nasty look. The civil guard did not feel deedy that evening. And he had talked so much that he was overcome with thirst. And all his friends would be drinking without him. He had worked hard enough for one day. And so, with as much dignity as he could muster, he announced that the affair must be 'reported,' and retreated in good order. That night and for many successive nights the policeman drank deeply. He considered the problem from every aspect, and the more he considered it the more it baffled him. If he reported to Pollensa his inability to secure Pépé as his guest, what would his superiors do? Why, reprimand him, of course; perhaps even move him on. For a policeman to be 'moved on,' that indeed would be the last indignity. In his difficulty he consulted Don Ramon, who, as a learned man able to write and to add figures together with miraculous speed and to speak the languages of the world, was, he felt, the person most likely to give him good counsel. 'And I say to 'eem,' said Ramon, as he related

this story to me with many thumps upon the marble table, 'I say to 'eem, you go see Pép and you tell Pép that he must pay you five pesetas. Then you pay three of those pesetas in Pollensa police-barracks. Everything all right, see?'

The policeman was much struck with this suggestion. In imagination he already jingled his own two pieces of silver. He saw himself marching home, along the dusty highway, marching straight to his table outside the inn of his choice, marching there with the price of twenty glasses of brandy in his trousers pocket. It was a grand thought. But he had reckoned without Pépé.

Now Pépé was not an unreasonable man, but he had certain principles. One of these was that he objected to parting with money. The little affair at Pollensa which had provoked all this trouble had been connected with the sum of twenty centesimos which the *fondista* there had tried unjustly to extract from him. And Pépé was capable of more than nasty looks.

The Guardian of the Law, with boots upon his feet, carbine in readiness, black moustaches *à la* Wilhelm, and an air of authority assumed for the occasion, advanced a second time to the attack. Like General Trochu, he had a plan. Everything was going to be friendly and jolly. He even thought of standing Pépé a drink — after it was all over. But it wasn't over yet. Pépé could be as friendly and jolly as anybody — up to a point. They proceeded, with many smiles, from a discussion of tomorrow's weather to a reference to 'this troublesome little matter.' Something must be done about it. 'My superior officers . . .' (here a twirl of the

moustaches, as much as to say, 'not that I really *have* any superiors'). 'But I've thought of an easy way of arranging the whole thing, my good Pépé. Settle it right out. . . . Report to headquarters. . . .'

Pépé waited, smiling and indifferent, until he caught the words 'five pesetas.' Then indeed, there was a transformation. The policeman guessed what was coming, from the blackening of Pépé's countenance, just as one anticipates a thunderstorm from the piling-up of inky clouds. The storm broke. The nasty north-enders came out of their *casas* and gathered round to listen to it. That odious Concha, Pépé's wife, could be seen, a pair of glistening tiger's eyes, in the dim darkness of Pépé's kitchen. While the flood of curses and vituperation was pouring down upon the policeman's head, his brain absolutely refused to work. What should he do or say? He wanted to run. But he didn't dare to run. The whole village would laugh at him. If only the Army would come and help him! Pépé wasn't half finished yet. . . . He was only working himself up. The policeman looked at a pile of loose boulders in a corner of Pépé's courtyard, and then he looked at Pépé. Pulling himself together with a desperate effort, he shouted in a voice like a large whisper, 'Stop! You shall hear more of this.' Then he broke and fled. Then he stopped fleeing, and marched with an assumption of majestic rage towards his *fonda*, with Pépé's curses still buzzing around him like a swarm of wasps. Once back in safety, inside his own lines, he collapsed into a seat, a shattered man. That was how the police force finally lost its *moral* in Puerto de Pollensa. From that day onwards the

reactionary influences of law and order deserted our village, let us hope for ever. My last memory of the port is of the policeman sitting with bowed head before a glass of brandy, outside the Fonda la Marina, while the Army — disconsolate as a defeated general — strove in vain to comfort him.

II

IBIZA

I

Of all the deplorable, flea-infested old tubs that ply between the Mediterranean ports, I fancy the bad ship Canalejas must be one of the very worst. She is dirty, uncomfortable, and slow. Food and drink aboard of her are dear and bad and the fares enormous. If she has a virtue, it is the negative one of acting as a deterrent to tourists. Indeed, her unwelcoming nastiness has proved an effective barricade against the encroachments of civilization, at least in so far as the enchanting island of Ibiza is concerned. While the Canalejas remains its only link between Alicante on the one hand and Palma de Mallorca on the other, it is fairly safe to prophesy that the smallest and most picturesque of the Balearic Islands will never become a 'resort.'

When I first looked at Ibiza on the large scale map — it was in the waiting-room of the Credito Balear in Palma — I had an intuition that I should have to go there, sooner or later. Really it was a case of love at first sight! Teresita was equally smitten, and before we set sail for Barcelona we decided to take shipping and explore.

The day of our departure was perfect — bright sunshine, clear blue sky and a clean cool breeze from the sea. We put our bags into the little yellow *carreton* and drove down to the quay where the Canalejas was moored.

The steward, in a dirty canvas coat, leered at us derisively as, stepping over recumbent islanders who had cast their cloaks on deck amidships and were being ritualistically sick, we made our way towards the cabins. They opened out of the saloon, and when we reached them Teresita, who can rough it with anybody when she likes, murmured faintly 'My God!' Then she laughed. At that moment a middle-aged, rather weather-beaten man, with one foot in a black boot, the other in an *alpagarta*, came into the saloon and laughed too.

One of Teresita's principal advantages as a travelling-companion is a genius for picking people up. She picks up anything human — old men, young men, fat women, babies, children — which may conceivably amuse her. The newcomer was promptly secured and proved an acquisition. He was an Irishman who had lived most of his life in Singapore and had now retired. He had bought a ticket to Alicante, because he liked its name. When he got there he would just stop in some hotel until the spirit moved him to go somewhere else. He was agreeably in no hurry. After our midday *comida*, to which we sat down as the boat passed the old watch-tower at Porto-Pi, we found some decayed canvas chairs and loafed in the shade outside the deck-house. While the Canalejas waddled slowly through the sea past the red Mallorcan cliffs, we lazily exchanged yarns and the time passed pleasantly enough. The Spanish afternoon, such of it as is not passed in bed, is never a strenuous time of the day. If one has a comfortable stomach — and the steward, to save himself trouble, brought us a bottle of Domecq and a syphon,

thus doing his best for us in this particular — it is a time for ease, for admiring contemplation of the beauties of nature, for a ripple of indifferent talk.

It was, I suppose, about seven hours after our departure from Palma that we first saw the black and sinister cliffs of our island. How frowning and romantic they looked in the slowly-gathering twilight! Two hours more of growing excitement, and then the Canalejas turned her old snub-nose towards the narrow opening which leads into the lagoon-like harbour of Ibiza. The sight which met our eyes once we had passed the lighthouse made us all gasp with delight. Ibiza has the trick, possessed by so many Mediterranean towns, of looking unbelievably magnificent from a certain distance. It was a flower-city, a city of dreams! Terraces of white houses gleaming in the fading light carried the eye up to a fortified citadel, surrounded by immense mediæval walls. Inside the citadel were more houses, the whole culminating in a grey cathedral flanked by a large pink palace. With what an unerring instinct for the spectacular had the place been built! How admirably adapted it was to give the last touch of romantic glamour to its unsurpassed situation!

When the wheezy Canalejas bumped at last against her moorings the boat was stormed by a gang of most ferocious-looking bandits. Their eyes flashed. They were ominously black-hatted and black-trousered, and they swooped like vultures upon the luggage. Teresita made a lightning conquest of our particular bandit. As we discovered later, the Ibizans are naturally chivalrous to women, and they are certainly more courteous and

hospitable to strangers than any other race I have ever encountered. Much kindliness may be concealed beneath a four-days' beard!

There are only two small *fondas* in the city of Ibiza, both of which are uninhabitable for all save the hardiest of travellers. One is presided over by a pompous individual with a stomach which he carries about with him like a big drum, and points at you in a highly disconcerting manner; the other can scarcely be said to be 'presided' over at all. A large and charming family, ranging in age from about nine months to about a century, inhabit the place and are only too delighted when visitors elect to stay with them. That, at least, was the impression which we formed. Our bandit evidently liked them, and was overjoyed when, after investigating the Fonda Marina, we followed him next door into the Fonda del Commercio.

When we entered its long, fly-blown café, we found the Señora — plump, brown-eyed, and *enceinte* — engaged in giving an evening meal from her ample bosom to Paquita, her youngest daughter. Round her were grouped her aunt, her mother-in-law, her husband, her son Pépé, aged ten, Maria, aged perhaps eight, Margarita, aged six, and the serving-maid, Catalina. The Señor stood in the foreground of the family group — statuesque, immobile, and silent, with black, brooding eyes. He looked rather like a tamed and emasculated lion, defeated, shackled, overcome by his family and his womenfolk. His tiny pub was his own private Mappin terrace, except that he was not allowed to roar in it.

Our arrival provoked beams of welcome from the

whole party. Even Paquita forgot to suck for a moment, and turned upon us a friendly eye, round and black as a boot-button. Little Margarita, straight-backed as a princess and dressed in a pretty blue frock, opened her brown-velvet Moorish orbs as wide as they would go, and gave us an enchanting smile. The Señor bowed with gravity. Having but little Castilian between us, rather less Catalan, and not a word, as yet, of Ibicenco, we shook hands with our host, bowed to the company, and sat down at a marble-topped table.

If Teresita's knowledge of Spanish is not all it might be, her way with babies acts as a *passe-partout* among a people as devoted to children as are the Spaniards. Soon a gorged Paquita was being dandled in her arms, and pinched and petted, while the Señor and I exchanged a knowing glance. These women! Margarita, meanwhile, had been conducting operations on her own account. She had dived under the table to inspect Teresita's underclothes. She stroked the silk of her stockings with a purr of pleasure, then, lifting up her frock, which was the colour of bull's blood, she found a petticoat with no less than seven lace flounces on it. With a cry of joy she counted them. 'Mire!' she cried. 'Siete!' By this time the café had begun to fill up. A fat gentleman in shirt-sleeves, whose figure bulged in front over his leather belt and bulged to an even greater extent behind, gave the petticoat his earnest and admiring attention. Even the Señor relaxed for a moment his impressive pose and glanced with respectful appreciation at the seven flounces. The Señora was in raptures. Maria, the aunts, and the mother-in-law gurgled

with pleasure. Margarita, discoverer of this unimaginably beautiful garment, could not keep her little hands off it.

Teresita thought it about time to cause a diversion. She opened her vanity-case and produced the lip-stick, without which she has never been known to stir. The case was full of little gilded powder-boxes, powder-puffs, and so forth, and these were immediately put into circulation amid cries of delight. Evidently it was a matriarchal society into which we had fallen. Males, the Señor and myself and our fat friend, were at a discount. Just when I was feeling rather bored, the fat gentleman produced a foot-rest and some brushes, and, grinning from ear to ear, proceeded to clean my shoes for me, that being — as with about one Balearic Islander in every five — his profession.

Decidedly it was a good place. It had been good from the first moment. I remembered again how good it had looked on the map. A lamb of an island! When Teresita and I managed to get a moment together, she observed, 'We've clicked with Ibiza.' We had. What did it matter if, to get to our beds, we had to creep down a little ladder into the street and then climb up several flights of break-neck stairs, there being no direct communication between the café and the floors above it? What did it matter if all the bedrooms opened out of one another, and if the only washstand was a communal one? What did the flies matter, either, or even an occasional mosquito?

II

Our first dinner at the Fonda del Commercio neither Teresita nor I is ever likely to forget. About a dozen of us sat down to the repast, disposed at three marble-topped tables. Pépé, a fair-haired boy with a long Spanish face, very different from the decidedly Moorish cast of countenance of his parents and sisters, had put on a peaked yachting-cap for the occasion, and acted as head waiter. With befitting dignity he brought in the first dish, a great pile of oil-soaked rice studded with small bits of fish, chicken's liver, mussels, and other doubtful delicacies.

There sat at our table my friend the bootblack, and a lively milliner from Barcelona, who had arrived with us in the Canalejas, bearing with her large basket trunks full of finery to tempt the Ibizan ladies. On our right was the telephone clerk from the post office — a resplendent figure in khaki uniform, with polished brown leather leggings and spurs all complete. But putting all these completely in the shade, overshadowing every one in the room, presiding over the repast by tacit consent through sheer inherent magnificence, was the unforgettable figure of the Nut.

The Nut wore canvas shoes with leather toe-caps. He was perfumed, he was powdered, his coat was cut in at the waist, he wore a silk shirt, a dark cravat, a jewelled tie-pin, a bracelet, a multiplicity of rings. His eyes and hair were jet-black, his complexion pale ivory. His build was on the portly side, his demeanour *hidalgo*-ish. He was the last to enter, and took his place at table, after a grave gesture of welcome, amid a palpitating silence. Once seated,

he frowned solemnly upon his plate. Then he despatched Pépé for two raw eggs and swallowed them at a gulp. I think he wanted all to know that he was a man of the world, that he came from no less a city than Valencia, and for this reason he took care to clothe himself in an atmosphere of sombre and mysterious sin. *L'homme fatal! Le Byron de nos jours* — and all the rest of it. Teresita, who knows Valencia, and had often seen the exquisitely attired nuts of that city hovering penniless outside clubs to which they had once belonged, in the hope that they might appear to the world in general to have just emerged from them, whispered odious suggestions in my ear. My own guess was Singer's sewing-machines, and this, though less romantic, turned out to be nearer the mark. Our friend, as we gathered from what we could understand of his conversation, travelled 'in' and not 'for.'

Considering the poverty of our Spanish, the dinner passed off very pleasantly. Everybody wanted to be as charming to us as the limitations of language rendered possible. But the supreme moment came when, at the end of dinner, Teresita, complaining of a headache, asked me if I had brought any aspirin. Alas! I had none. The Nut who, until that time, had not favoured us with much of his attention, caught the word 'aspirin,' and took in the situation at a glance. 'As-pir-ee-na!' he exclaimed in a profound and tragic bass. 'Aspir-ee-na! Si si, Señora.' He nodded his head gravely, as much as to say, 'I see we understand one another. We are civilized!' He rose from his seat, quickly disappeared, and in a few minutes returned and presented Teresita with six aspirin tablets

elegantly twisted up in a wisp of paper. His bow was superb. From then onwards the Nut acknowledged us as his equals.

Dinner ended at about a quarter to ten, but it was another hour before we were able to escape from our hosts and explore the town. Margarita, carefully powdered, with a ribbon in her hair and a gold bracelet round her little forearm, came up to us again, with her slow, coy smile. Her small brown fingers wanted to investigate every single article of Teresita's apparel. Paquita, the infant, still wide awake, gurgled and crowed as she was passed round from lap to lap. (The Señora was rather tired of her, and wanted to discuss the news of the day and the doings of the world.) The aunts and other members of the household grouped themselves in a half-circle. When the *frigola* had circulated — *frigola* is a syrupy, orange-coloured local liqueur — everybody began to talk at once. Various treasures were displayed, and Catalina, urged thereto by her mistress, ran to her room to fetch her gold filigree ornaments and her gold buttons, of which she was pardonably proud. These gold buttons are greatly esteemed by the Ibizans. They are worn in a double row on the sleeves of the bodice, and stretch from the wrist to the elbow. In addition to her buttons, Catalina had a gold crucifix attached to a long filigree necklace. She kept her magnificence in a cardboard box, on cotton-wool, in between the *fiestas*.

We escaped at last into the cool night and started to explore. Across the stillness of the land-locked harbour the lighthouse at the entrance turned at intervals its meditative yellow beam.

The sky was ablaze with stars. Behind us the little town was carrying on its night life like a toy metropolis. Murmurs came to us as we stood by the water-side, and sometimes a burst of laughter or the distant note of a stringed instrument. Moored here and there against the quay were clusters of old schooners, *faluchas* engaged in the inter-island trade, and one or two tiny steamers. We walked on in silence, and, leaving the town behind us, skirted the shore of the bay. The road ran through a flat, marshy country dotted with small, Moorish-looking farms, separated from one another by narrow dykes. The dykes were full of frogs which barked incessantly, and Teresita thought she might like them better in the morning. So we retraced our steps towards the brightly lit city. It was on our way back to the *fonda* that we discovered, on the quay, the perfect home from home. This was a little café facing the harbour, not far from the new Alameda which is Ibiza's supreme attempt at civic dignity. It was kept by two twin brothers who took it in turns to preside over the bar. They were so exactly alike that it was only possible to distinguish them by the amount of English which they spoke. Our particular brother had served for twelve years before the mast in an American sailing-ship, and talked English fairly well. He was a sad but kindly man, with thick black moustaches which drooped despondently. He never smiled, but he was a paragon of courtesy and benevolence. Dressed in a cloth cap, a more or less white shirt and blue dungarees, he walked about his café with a nautical roll, filling up the coffee-cups from an aluminium kettle.

Teresita's appearance is what is commonly called 'striking.' In a Mallorquin café the natives would show obvious signs of having been struck. But the Ibizans are much more mannerly, and when we entered the café we were not unduly stared at. Our despondent friend came across to us and wished us a melancholy good evening. It was a problem to know what to drink, and on this point he could not enlighten us. 'There's nothing here that you would like,' he observed sadly. And there wasn't. We looked at the rows of bottles of perilous local liqueurs — Frigola, anis Delmoro, Palo, and a dozen others — at the imitation Chartreuse, bogus Benédictine, sham Amer picon, Barcelona brandy, all dressed up to look like Martell, and imitation Italian Vermouth. ('Vermouth Barcino es el Mejor,' was the legend beneath a coloured picture of a young lady with straw-coloured hair, strolling through a landscape in patent leather shoes, which hung on the wall. Alas! it was far from being a truthful legend.) Not even Domecq could our friend provide for us, so we made do with the Barcelonese alternative. Teresita, purring with pleasure and knowing herself the cynosure of every eye, took out her lip-stick and then rolled herself a not very successful cigarette out of contraband tobacco smuggled over from Gibraltar. I had not learnt the art of cigarette-rolling, so I smoked one of the 'Elegantes' which I had bought at the *arrendataria.* You get fourteen of them for a peseta. They have cork tips, are made of black Havana tobacco, and are painfully strong for anyone who, like myself, is accustomed to 'gaspers.'

The café was moderately full. There were per-

haps a dozen Ibizans, dressed in black corduroy trousers, black hats, and collarless shirts, two or three Mallorquin sailors and a pair of ancient sea-captains. Some were playing a gambling game very popular in the islands, but which I have never yet been able to follow, with queer cards not unlike Tarot cards. At midnight the inevitable quarrel happened, but, in deference to Teresita's presence and the bar-tender's expostulations, the disputants did not produce their revolvers in the usual Ibizan manner. Instead, I think the quarrellers went off to the cinema. Teresita and I, unusually sleepy after our voyage, departed to bed. I do not know when the Ibizans go to bed. I was never able to stay up late enough to discover.

III

The elect, who know how to use the unsurpassed handbooks of Mr. Karl Baedeker, will be at once intrigued by the brevity of his comment ('Spain and Portugal,' 1908) on Ibiza. '. . . The steamers from Alicante (149 m.) and from Valencia (161 m.) pass, after 11–12 hours, between the mountainous island of Iviza, culminating in the Atalayasa (1560 ft.) and the flat island of Formentera. They stop for a few hours at Iviza (British vice-consulate), the capital of the former, a town with 6327 inhab., an old castle, and a cathedral (fine view) and reach Palma in 9 hours more.' You see, you aren't really encouraged to do more than land for that 'few hours' and visit the 'old castle' (which does not exist) or to climb up to the 'cathedral (fine view)' which does. To the expert Baedeker-ite the passage, being interpreted, means that there is abso-

lutely no tourist traffic to Ibiza, and that the whole island does not contain one single inn or hotel which could truthfully be described even as 'moderate.' If you are a thoroughly respectable person, with lots of suitcases, trees for all your shoes and wallets adequately lined with notes, you will take Mr. Baedeker's broad hint. If, on the other hand, you belong to the baggy-trousered, impecunious kind of Continental tramp, you will take Mr. Baedeker's subtle hint. Mr. Baedeker knows his business. To the amateur of islands Ibiza has everything to recommend it. In size it is neither too large nor too small. At a rough calculation it is, I suppose, about twenty-odd miles from end to end and about a dozen miles broad. It is not mountainous, as Mr. Baedeker states, but it is continuously up and down — ridge after ridge of low but steep hills, partially covered with pines. The island is fairly fertile and well cultivated. Its principal export now, as for the past two thousand years or more, is salt. The *salinas*, or salt-pans, are about four or five miles from the town of Ibiza, at the southern extremity of the island, and consist of a number of shallow basins covering about six square miles. The principal villages are San Antonio on the west coast, Santa Eulalia on the east, and San Juan Bautista in the north. They are distant nine, ten and fourteen miles respectively from Ibiza and can all be reached very quickly by motor diligences, whose superstructures do not conceal the familiar outlines of the ubiquitous 'flivver.'

The two or three main roads of the island, legacies from the Roman period, are straight and good, but the lesser roads are scarcely possible for

wheeled traffic. The island women make most of their journeys on donkey-back, and very pretty they look sailing slowly along the dusty *carretera* to do the day's marketing. They sit their asses with the utmost grace, and hold their umbrellas at a coquettish angle, with a natural *chic* of which a Parisian would not be ashamed. On either side of the donkeys are big basket panniers into which innumerable articles can be safely stowed. The girls usually wear yellow handkerchiefs over the backs of their heads, and brown or yellow shawls. They have, combined with a charming simplicity, all the subtle graces which women can acquire under an amorous sky. In Ibiza passions are hot, and women — since they are greatly in the minority — at a premium. When an Ibizan farmer's daughter reaches a marriageable age, an announcement is sent out to the district and on an appointed evening the ceremony of courtship takes place. The boys who turn up are each allotted ten minutes or a quarter of an hour in which to do their best to win the maiden's heart. Woe betide the boy who outstays his allotted time by so much as thirty seconds. The Ibizans are hot-blooded, revolvers are plentiful, and the police find it wiser not to investigate *crimes passionnels*. After the last of the suitors has paid his last compliment, the girl makes her choice, the engagement is announced, and is no doubt celebrated by a great deal of eating and drinking and dancing.

It is a good island for women. I don't suppose they have votes, but — if the household of Señor Torres Tur, our host at the Fonda del Commercio, is anything to go by — they certainly have power.

I used to find my walks abroad with Teresita quite embarrassing. On one Sunday afternoon, within two kilometres of the city, she was handed no less than ten bouquets of wild flowers by ten smiling youths. Alas, I had to carry them home for her, through the broiling sunshine.

Ibiza is a town which looks very much larger than it really is, so effectively is it situated. It is divided into two halves. The lower town — La Marina — grew up outside the massive fortifications when the island lost its riches and the Corsairs ceased to be a menace. In the upper town, La Ciudad, are the houses of the wealthier inhabitants — some quite seigneurial in their magnificence — the Cathedral, the Bishop's palace, the Barracks, and a small but extremely interesting museum containing relics of the many civilizations — Greek, Roman, Phœnician, Moorish — which have at different epochs established themselves upon the island. Just outside the walls of the city, on the hilltop, is the Phœnician necropolis of Ereso, which contains over two thousand tombs, which those who are sufficiently interested can enter. I was told that if I took a spade and dug I should be almost certain to find something of interest — broken pottery, a statuette, perhaps coins. But I am no digger, particularly under a broiling sun, and I preferred, in the coolness of the museum, to admire the results of other people's toil. The cathedral, which has a grey and weatherbeaten appearance, is not really older than the seventeenth century. It stands on a site successively occupied by a Phœnician temple of Baal, a Greek temple of Minerva, and a Moorish mosque. Inside, it is clean and

cool, and decorated in a queer Baroque style, no doubt by island craftsmen, with naïve statues and pictures of the saints and painted altars mellowed by time into the most enchanting colour combinations. If La Ciudad evokes memories of the days when Ibiza was prosperous, when the export of its purple dyes, its terra-cotta figures, its salt and ore, brought it so much wealth that it attracted the embarrassing attentions of the Mediterranean pirates, it now presents, from the tourist standpoint, not a great deal of interest. The principal charm of the upper town is the view. From the ramparts outside the cathedral you can look down upon the harbour, with its picturesque shipping, and across the bay to the lighthouse, and the little hills beyond it, all bathed in sunlight. Then walking on under an archway, you find when you emerge an entirely fresh *coup d'œil* in the opposite direction. Below you lies another enchanting stretch of coast-line. In the middle distance is an old stone tower standing on a tiny headland, and far away, on the horizon, is the dark outline of the cliffs of the island of Formentara. The stretch of sea here, as all round Ibiza, is studded with great solitary rocks and tiny islands, about which the water breaks in a glittering froth of foam. The view was so exquisite, with the sunshine sparkling on the yellow sands and on the sapphire waters of the Mediterranean, that when we first came upon it Teresita and I found a comfortable place under a gnarled and twisted olive tree, and sat down, so full of sheer happiness that we did not want to speak. It was just too good to be true: the island of our dreams. At last, as I suffer, in sunshiny countries, from an

inability to keep my clothes on, I made my way painfully down the hillside to the shore and, finding a convenient cave, discarded the offending garments and slipped into the sea. The rocks were sharp and cut my feet, and there were tiresome drifts of seaweed, but I did not care. I lay on my back, cradled in the clear, sparkling water, and looked up at the sky and could have found no unhappy thing to think about had I tried never so desperately. The trials and afflictions of this mortal life were simply washed out of my memory, and my heart sang inside me in sheer thankfulness for a rapture of the senses which I had never expected to experience again.

The people of Ibiza are the very soul of kindness to the *forastero*. As a good host will treat an honoured guest, so they welcome the strangers who come among them. Their unaffected courtesy and friendliness, and their unwillingness to exploit the traveller financially — on occasions they even make it difficult for him to pay the modest sum he owes — do much to convince one that the modern commercialized civilization is really as black as philosophers and poets love to paint it. On one occasion, when we had completely lost our way, we came upon a farmhouse. A group of labourers and a middle-aged man rather better dressed than the peasants were leaning over the mud wall in front of the house, and laughing and talking together, in the cool of the evening. Taking my courage in both hands, I went up to them and asked them in French whether they could tell me how to get to the road. Luckily the superior individual, who turned out to

be the owner of the farm, understood French and could himself speak it a little. He at once came out to us and insisted upon guiding us through his beautifully cultivated farm and putting us on our way. All the time he carried on a stream of conversation, sometimes in Castilian for Teresita, sometimes in French for me. Following the island custom, he asked us our Christian names and at once called us by them in the most gracious manner conceivable. Nor did he part with us when we emerged from his domain on to the bridle-path. We must visit a friend of his, he insisted, who had a wonderful aquarium full of *langostas*. He simply would not be denied. We came to the langosta-merchant's house, and were ushered into the yard at the back and introduced to a very tall, very fat and very cheerful old gentleman and to his son, his daughter and her young man. Before we were shown the lobsters, the boy of the house, a student at the 'University' of Ibiza, was urged to display to us his knowledge of English. There followed a rather horrifying cross-examination. 'What is your name? What age have you? What does your father? What number peoples has city of Lon-don?' Luckily, though he could pose these pulverizing questions, his English did not enable him to understand the replies. After we had complimented Don Jaime on his son's proficiency in English, we were invited to go down on our knees and peer into a hole. Far below us the innocent *langostas*, at present in ignorance of their ultimate fate, were moving about in considerable numbers. After this we were shown a strange Heath-Robinson device of little canals, traps, pumps and pulleys

by which first the *langostas* were lured into their prison, and secondly the water in it was kept continually in motion while they were there. It was a most baffling and complicated arrangement, and Teresita was so taken aback by it that it was four minutes before she could scrape together enough Castilian to tell our host how clever she thought it. She did so at last, however, and Don Jaime's face broke up into one vast beam. The *langosta* trap was the pride and joy of his life. Night had now fallen, and the stars — *estrillas* in Ibicenco — had already lit their glittering lamps in the velvet black above us, when we set off, four abreast, down the *carretera*. Neither Don Jaime nor his friend Juan would leave us until they had seen us safely to our *fonda*, and all the way they gave us lessons in Ibicenco, pointing to the stars, the olive trees, and the simple objects that we passed en route, and telling us their names in the island patois.

After some days spent in the city of Ibiza, during which we went into all the churches, visited the cool and shady meat-market which has a fountain in the centre and is bright with scarlet geraniums, and the general market, which is a replica of the Parthenon, and the Alameda, with its rival cinemas and its comic statue of a Cuban patriot leaning forward with outstretched sword over the naked form of a young lady who offers him a laurel wreath; after we had tipped the three official beggars of the city — including the ancient lady who stands outside the great stone gateway, flanked by headless Roman statues, which leads into La Ciudad and stretches out in silence a withered and compelling arm; after we had done all these things, and in the

intervals many times revisited our favourite café, Teresita decided that we ought to explore the island and visit the official sights. All I could think of as a means of enlightenment as to what constituted the official sights was to make a call at the British vice-consulate. We found the place at last: it was a grain-merchant's office, on the quay. The top storey of a house lower down was for some reason decorated with the Royal Arms of our country, but a young gentleman, guessing our errand, had caught us at the door and redirected us. We walked into the office, but there was no grain-merchant, only a few rickety chairs, a large-scale map of Ibiza and innumerable flies.

Since the consul was not at home, we decided to get into a diligence and see what happened. No one could tell us where or when the diligence started. Apparently it went when it felt inclined. Luckily, quite by chance, we found one on the point of departure, and were soon bumping down the highway towards the tiny port of San Antonio.

For eight miles or so the road passed between low red hills covered with pines, with well-cultivated fields upon their slopes, and white houses with flat roofs dotted here and there about them; and then suddenly the long, narrow inlet, a streak of sapphire amid the surrounding red and green, became visible, and a few minutes later the car entered the village, and drew up, panting, before the Fonda la Esmeralda. It does not take long to explore San Antonio. By the water-side is a little square, planted with acacia trees, which forms the focus of the village life. In the centre is a fortified church, whitewashed and dazzling in the sunlight. There

are perhaps two hundred little houses in the village, arranged in clean but narrow streets, cutting one another at right angles. Beyond the confines of the village is a bare and stony stretch of land, which separates it from the sea. Below is the long, narrow harbour. Halfway between the village and the open sea, a stone jetty stretches out an arm to protect the group of *faluchas* which lie at anchor. The whole scene is enchanting, and in the heat of the afternoon we could not bring ourselves to leave it to go in search of the cave church of Santa Ines, or to look for Moorish pottery which, it is said, can be picked up by the armful in its vicinity. Instead, we walked along by the creek to the cliff's edge, and sat looking across the island-studded sea, watching the sun sparkling on the white foam and on the dancing waves. Our innkeeper, his wife, his mother and his handsome son and daughters showed us their best bedroom, and very clean and comfortable it looked. They also gave us an excellent luncheon, though the wine they offered us to wash it down with was dark and acid and could not be made drinkable even with a large admixture of water.

Santa Eulalia, on the eastern side of the island, is a slightly larger village than San Antonio, and is generally considered the more beautiful of the two. It has an interesting, well-situated, fortified church and priest's house, a real brook full of water all the year round, an old water-mill, two *fondas* and a shady central plaza sloping down to the sea. A few kilometres beyond it is a smaller and more remote village, San Carlos. Here the road ends abruptly. Nothing could be more tranquil, more completely

primitive, isolated and forgotten. Even the commotion once caused by the working of a coppermine, the venture of an English company whose derelict plant decays by the roadside between the two villages, is a thing of the past. The mine has been abandoned, its English manager is gone, and only its deserted buildings and rusty machinery remain to bear witness to the unquenchable optimism of the English investor. The Church of San Carlos, a plain, white-washed building, approached through a charming loggia, is decorated with a child-like naïveté, in a queer, rustic, Baroque style. As in all the island churches, the painted wooden effigies of the saints wait patiently for their annual outings, on either side of the aisle. For those who wish to hide themselves amid beautiful surroundings, among an unspoilt peasantry, I can think of no hamlet more suitable for their purpose than San Carlos, where the roadway ends at the church door. It ends, I suppose, as roads should end: because it has nowhere else to go to. We should never have chanced on it had we not, after missing the diligence in Ibiza, hired for our journey the one privately owned Ford car which the island possesses. The owner, wishing to make the most of the occasion, insisted on taking us as far as the road permitted him to go. We saw this sporting individual again, at night, lolling in a box at the cinema, no doubt with the one and only courtesan. He was a young man, rather flashily dressed, but a sad sight to look upon, for his head had been shaved all over as if he had recently suffered from an unpleasant skin-disease. The two girls who danced and sang in turn, after the pictures — their names

were Angelita Rubio and Maria Benito — had chosen our *fonda*, and Teresita, with her usual skill, had made excellent friends with them. After the performance, we went up to their room and sat under the stars on their roomy balcony, singing songs and drinking dubious *crême de menthe*. There were several vaguely theatrical males attached to them — they, perhaps, were playing at the rival cinema — and the whole party were gay and lively as children, and almost as pleased with Teresita's underclothes as little Margarita had been. They had the true strolling player's gift of making themselves at home, and I can remember few happier evenings.

Teresita noted down the airs of many of their songs in her patent musical shorthand, and when she plays or sings the tunes we heard that evening, the whole scene comes back to me — the warm night air, the blaze of stars overhead, the lapping of the sea against the quayside, the groaning of the *faluchas* jostling one another in the harbour, and the vivacious faces of the blonde Angelita and the dark-haired Maria as they sang, argued, and chattered to the company.

All good things have a way of coming to too quick an end, and our visit to Ibiza was no exception. Almost, however, the Fates intervened to keep us where we were. When the time came for us to depart, our old friend the Canalejas, due to arrive at 8 P.M., was not, we discovered, expected to turn up before two in the morning. What more natural than that we should while away the hours by taking a nap? We did so, and I remember no more till Teresita came into my room, shook me,

and said, 'Isn't that the siren?' We looked out of the window. There was the Canalejas on the point of departure. Señor Torres Tur arrived, much agitated. We had five minutes, he said. Telling Teresita to pack, I threw my clothes on, rushed downstairs, and paid the bill. Friendly bandits arrived from nowhere in great agitation. They flew upstairs, seized our luggage and descended. We followed, breathless. Waving our farewells, we pursued them to the ship. Too late; the gangway was already up and the donkey-engine was rattling. But no, all was not lost. Telling us to follow, the bandits raced to the nearest steps and jumped into a small boat. We jumped too. Only at that moment did I feel grateful to the Canalejas for being leisurely in her movements. We reached her without much difficulty — before doing so the bandits extracted fifteen pesetas from me — and seized the rope-ladder which had been let down for us. As a delicate attention, great puffs of steam were emitted from the internals of the ship to make our climb as uncomfortable as possible. At last we reached the deck. The bandits followed with our bags, threw them over the gunwale and disappeared. We were on board: that was about all we could say. I thought regretfully of my tie, my red leather slippers, Teresita's kodak, and all the other treasures which in our haste had been left behind. But most regretfully of all I thought of Ibiza. Why had we left it? What had we been thinking of? The yellow eye of the lighthouse winked knowingly, and without a trace of sympathy. The steward, with the same four days' beard, the same dirty canvas coat and almost toothless

mouth, openly derided us. The dream was all over, nothing left of it but a memory, the sweets of which are now not unmixed with the bitterness of regret. *Partir c'est mourir un peu!*

III

LIGURIA

I

The Mediterranean littoral from Ventimiglia to Genoa, though not quite so frequented by travellers and tourists as the stretch of coast between Toulon and Menton, is yet decidedly a 'beaten track.' It has, of course, its unspoiled spots and its 'dear little places that nobody goes to.' After spending six weeks in one of the latter, my views about such 'dear little places' began to change, and I began to feel that the crowd is, after all, not such a fool as it looks. There are places, like persons, which have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. In this category (and I have been soundly scolded for doing so) I found myself putting Diano Marina. I don't believe any Englishman could have a more fervent love for Italy than I, but one cannot help liking some parts of it more than others. Every visitor to this enchanting land has his individual preferences and prejudices.

For some reason or other, then, I never took to Diano. I hate to say nasty things about it because G. B. Stern, the novelist, and her husband, Geoffrey Holdsworth, who have built themselves a delightful villa on the spur of a hill overlooking the wretched place, did everything in their power to make my stay agreeable. But they had their own home, their own hillside, their own olive groves, and they could ignore Diano completely. I could not.

Up till about forty years ago the town must have been pleasant enough, though doubtless dirty and unhealthy. But in 1887 there came an earthquake which destroyed the greater part of it, and it was rebuilt on hygienic lines, with broad streets, a drainage system and a water supply. The doctors said it was eminently healthy; and the townsfolk waited confidently for an English invasion. One enterprising person ran up an hotel facing a shingly beach from which bathing is all but impossible; another converted a large villa, situated slightly nearer to the one meagre expanse of sand of which the bay can boast, into a *pension*; a third erected a gimcrack casino and bathing establishment. They waited — when I was there they were still waiting — but except in small numbers and with the most ruthlessly economical intentions, the English had obstinately failed to invade. Neither had any great quantity of Italians ever assembled in July and August for its dismal 'grand season.' The place was thus neither 'primitive and unspoiled' nor was it gay and popular. Alassio, its flourishing neighbour, took all the wind out of its poor sails, and beat it at every point.

Its situation, however, is charming. It stands on level ground, on the shores of an attractive bay. Behind it rise, in a semi-circle, the olive-terraced hills on a spur of which stands the enchanting little mediæval town of Diano Castello, keeping a disdainful eye upon its upstart neighbour. To the east is the ancient town of Cervo, whose houses fall like a cascade of masonry down the steep hillside, almost into the sea.

From a distance Diano Marina has much to

recommend it: from the train, also. It was, I believe, by the view from the train that my friends were first ensnared. The stretch of coast between Ventimiglia and Diano is perhaps the least attractive of any stretch of similar length between Genoa and Port-Bou. In the summer, particularly, it looks for the most part dusty, arid and uninviting. Bordighera, San Remo, San Stefano, Porto Maurizio, and Oneglia — one is glad to leave them behind. Then, a few minutes after leaving Oneglia, the train comes out of a tunnel, and one sees on one side an azure sea, on the other a vista of mountains in the distance, whose foothills are covered with olives. Here and there a village emerges, grouped around a graceful biscuit-coloured campanile. And Diano Castello, beautiful in sunshine or in rain, beautiful in every aspect and under all conditions, comes into view just as the train slows down. I can understand jaded but enthusiastic travellers leaping off the train, in raptures, and deciding in haste to live at Diano for years.

The flat in which I spent most of my time at Diano was quite the most unpleasant habitation I have ever yet encountered. It was the top floor of a square, whitewashed villa, erected in one of the hottest and most shadeless parts of a singularly shadeless town, by a local profiteer. The hideous mass-production furniture was reduced to the barest necessities: there was not a single comfortable chair in the place, and my bed was not even furnished with a mosquito-net. I trust that the owner, when he gets what is coming to him, will be made to share his corner of the infernal regions with all the flies and mosquitoes on the Ligurian

coast. How the sun burned down upon that odious villa! *Soggiorno incantevole!* The flies used to collect in my bedroom, in which I was supposed also to 'write my book,' not in hundreds, but in tens of thousands. My counterpane was black with them. At night, when, half-suffocated, I threw open the *persiennes*, every unoccupied mosquito in the town came zm-m-ming into the room to bite me, and when they had well bitten, they went off to tell their friends. Write my book, indeed! All I could do, after a night of endless battle against fearful odds, was to crawl into the sea and float on my back. On shore the sand-bugs were lying in wait for me, to complete the work of the mosquitoes.

I had arranged to come to Diano for six weeks, and — unfortunately for myself — I have as great a dislike of not keeping to arrangements as I have for setting out for a given destination and not reaching it. I stuck it, and for the appointed time I remained in the 'Villa Inferno,' among the flies and the dirt, the mosquitoes and the temperamental hen, but how I managed it I do not know. But for visits to my friends on their hillside, the coolness of the sea and the shade of the adjacent olive groves, I should probably have qualified for a lunatic asylum within a week. As far as I could see, but I admit prejudice in the matter, the town offered but little distraction for the visitor, save the possibility of catching a train from it into Alassio. A queer bright look used to come into people's faces on the beach at Diano, which meant that they had just thought of an excuse for spending the day in Alassio. Arrived in Alassio, the visitors from Diano would walk to a small café-restaurant facing the

sea — the Caffè Cattivo — and sit drinking poisonous cocktails until it was time to go home. A limitless capacity for being swindled, indeed a positive enjoyment of it, seemed part of the make-up of the Diano English, the impudent dishonesty of whose Italian servants was a subject of ceaseless mirth among the Dianese. Even in Alassio, their uncanny instinct for being 'bled' had led them at once to the Caffè Cattivo. This place was run by a most engaging rascal who had lived in England, and spoke a little English. He overcharged so recklessly that his honest and agreeable wife (when she heard him doing it) was made to blush for very shame. The more knowing of the English and Americans in Alassio, particularly those who had lived long in Italy, avoided the Caffè Cattivo like the plague. They drank their dry Martinis on the comfortable, leather-covered sofas of the Caffè Vairo. Here, before luncheon, one would see a group of red-faced rear admirals (retired), fruity old colonels and other mature imbibers, all seriously imbibing. The drinks were at least what they purported to be, and the cocktails excellent.

But the guileless visitors from Diano, so eager, so pleased with everything, were quite content with the Cattivo. They loved being talked to, and the interested geniality of the proprietor sent them into raptures for which they held their superfluous lire well lost. Besides, it was so handy: the station was so near!

A Neapolitan friend who shared my prejudice against Diano used to say to me, 'Italy does not begin until you get to Genoa. These Ligurians they are 'orrible peoples, worse than the Jews.

They think only of money. They are not Italians at all.' How much truth there was in his remarks I am naturally not in a position to know. I never found the Ligurians 'horrible' — on the contrary, their marvellous acuteness in summing up character, the lightning quickness of their mental processes, and their sense of humour aroused my ardent admiration. It is true that the bourgeoisie were grasping — men, for example, like the proprietor of the Villa Inferno — but the rest of the community, I am convinced, cared primarily for swindling *qua* swindling. The swindle itself was the object — the fun of playing to the English 'gallery,' of trading upon English weaknesses, of exercising their nimble wits, as it were, in a game of chance. When, as happened once at Diano, a redoubtable old Irishwoman 'did in' half the town, they accepted their discomfiture with the utmost good humour. They didn't mind the loss of their money, so keen was their appreciation of the skill and effrontery with which they had been robbed. For their victims, on the other hand, they felt not admiration but amused contempt.

If it had not been for the flies and the mosquitoes, for the hen which slept on the meat safe, and misbehaved herself at 6 A.M. every morning outside my bedroom door, to a musical accompaniment expressing pride and self-satisfaction, but who never by any chance laid an egg, the humours of Diano might have atoned for its other deficiencies. The warfare which went on between the Italian servants of the various English families was more violent even than the temperamental differences of their employers. The Villa Inferno was looked

after by a charming virago with projecting front teeth and distraught eyes, who was at daggers-drawn with the servants of our friends on the hill-side, and did her subtle best to involve the two households in a frantic quarrel. Apart from this Chiara had her good points. Her *zucchine* — tiny vegetable marrows fried in butter — were delicious. And she knew a number of Ligurian folk-songs, which, primed by a glass of Strega, she was ready to sing after luncheon. The air of one of them, of which the only words I can remember are

'Nikola, Nikola, ha ha ha —
Ha ha ha ha Nikola,'

comes persistently into my head as I write. And she would teach the small English toddlers on the beach the local nursery rhymes, one of which runs as follows:

'Papa! Mamma!
Grazioso non e vero?
Papa! Mamma!
Grazioso in verità!'

Tiny children, obviously Anglo-Saxon, would also be heard clapping their hands together, under Chiara's instructions, and crooning to themselves, 'Batti le mani che viene Papa . . . Batti le mani che viene Papa.'

Chiara, as she liked her mistress, always returned the majority of the garments she stole. There would be weepings and protestations, she would tear her hair, strike an attitude and call God to witness that she was innocent of having robbed her beloved Dona, that it was unthinkable that she, Chiara — so well brought up, so universally re-

spected, so stainless — could sink to such depths of moral turpitude. The stolen undies would later on be placed under a mattress, and rapturously discovered. Every one would then feel happy and jolly, and Chiara would have the fun of stealing them all over again the following week.

II

Chiara had a good deal of mixed information, of the folk-lore variety, about her native place and its surroundings. According to her, Diano Castello was at one time a great seaport, rivalling Genoa in importance, but hundreds of years ago the sea had retreated, leaving it high-and-dry upon its hilltop. The various Dianos — Diano Marina, Diano Castello, Diano Arentino — took their name from the chaste goddess Diana, who had once gone upon a mighty hunting expedition in the neighbourhood. At the spot where the Albergo Due Cervi now stands she had killed two stags, and at the town of Cervo she had killed again. After that there was a great cult of Diana in the district, and a temple was erected in her honour. 'But Cervo,' Chiara would add, 'is a very dirty place, *sporca!* You can see the bugs there crawling in continuous procession, up and down the steep stone staircases!' For the earthquake there was, of course, an adequate explanation. God did not do these things merely for fun — on the contrary. The earthquake took place at carnival time, according to Chiara, 'and the wicked priests of Diano were dancing in women's clothes, when they met their end. . . .'

Cervo may be dirty; I did not investigate; but it is undeniably picturesque. On the left, just before

the train enters its station, one passes a circular Moorish mosque, to which a Baroque façade has been stuck on, to give it the appearance of a Christian church. It is a reminder of the days when the whole Ligurian coast was subject to invasions from the Saracens. There is also a bigger Renaissance church at Cervo which is decidedly magnificent. After Cervo one comes to the village of Andora Marina, pleasantly situated, with a wild and mountainous background, then the train plunges into a tunnel and emerges at Laigueglia, a little fishing village with narrow, cavernous streets, about two kilometres from Alassio. From Laigueglia as far as the Capo de Santa Croce beyond Alassio, there is a stretch of firm white sand which may be equalled on the Riviera but can hardly be surpassed. This stretch of sand has made the fortune of Alassio as a summer bathing resort, and with such an endowment of nature the little town is not likely to lose its popularity. When my six weeks' sentence at Diano came to an end, I moved to a small hotel in Alassio, close to the *spiaggia*, and prepared to enjoy the humours of an Italian watering-place in its 'grand season.'

From November to the month of May Alassio is more English than Italian. There is an English club, and there are English tennis courts and an excellent English circulating library. There is also an English chapel and an English chaplain, so that those to whom Matins and Hymns A. and M. are a spiritual necessity need not be deprived of home comforts. The types of our fellow countrymen and fellow countrywomen who form the majority of the foreign population of this and other favoured spots

are familiar to all who travel on the main lines of Europe. For the most part they are retired soldiers, sailors or civil servants, living on pensions too exiguous to enable them to gratify the social aspirations of their wives and daughters in Ealing, Earl's Court, Cheltenham, or the Cromwell Road. But, with the lira at about one hundred to the pound sterling, they are able, in Alassio, to live in tolerable comfort and to develop some sort of social life on respectable suburban lines. The girls can dance to their hearts' content, for next to nothing; and there are usually a certain number of marriageable men to escort them. The wives can take tea with one another, play at being society queens, and patronize such of the English visitors as are willing to submit to it. Every one knows these dear, good, simple people. They are cut to pattern, and their kind is now being exported from our shores in ever-increasing numbers. They do not trouble to learn Italian or to get to know the Italians, and they care nothing for the history or the art of the country they invade. They are concerned only to develop on a small scale a colourable imitation of the kind of English social life from which they feel that Fate has cruelly excluded them. They have their 'acknowledged social leaders,' their clubs and their tea-parties, their tennis and their golf, and they gloat — ah, with such rapture and despair! — over the English illustrated society papers. Among the women there is, of course, a certain proportion of those strange spinsters of religious principles, so heart-breaking in their oddity, of whom 'Miss Harriet' is the classic instance. Indeed, one cannot read Maupassant's description of Miss Harriet

without calling to mind dozens of examples of her type encountered on the Continent: 'C'était, en vérité, une de ces exaltées à principes, une de ces puritaines opiniâtres comme l'Angleterre en produit tant, une de ces vieilles et bonnes filles insupportables qui hantent toutes les tables-d'hôte de l'Europe, gâtent l'Italie, empoisonnent la Suisse, rendent inhabitables les villes charmantes de la Méditerranée, apportent partout leurs manies bizarres, leurs mœurs de vestales pétrifiées, leurs toilettes indescriptibles et une certaine odeur de caoutchouc qui ferait croire qu'on les glisse, la nuit, dans un étui.' Together with the retired colonels and civil servants, the superannuated medicos, and their families, and the Miss Harriets, there are to be found as a rule in the places a certain number of invalids — consumptive curates, neurasthenic married women and aged hypochondriacs — a few English keepers of boarding-houses, and the usual nondescript bar-loafers who move slowly up and down the Mediterranean littoral. Alassio is altogether, from the English standpoint, a friendly, jolly little town; and any English visitor will tell you that the new tennis courts have 'made it.'

Towards the end of May a stern look comes into the hotel-keeper's face when he greets his English guests. The heat, he informs them — with a significant scowl — will soon become insupportable. So the tennis courts close, the excellent circulating library shuts its doors, the Club premises are locked and bolted, the English season is declared 'over,' and Alassio once again becomes Italian. There follows a month of quiet preparation, during which time extra beds are stuffed into every avail-

able room, extra waiters and maidservants are hired, and the little town is cleaned and polished. Then follow the two months of its 'grand season,' when prices are nearly doubled and the town makes more money than during the whole half-year of the English occupation. On July 1st, from Milano and Torino, comes the first trainload of holiday-makers and from then onwards till the end of August the town is gradually packed to suffocation with Italian business people and their wives and families. The transformation is amazing. As if by magic the sands become covered with bathing-tents and thronged with bathers, from Santa Croce almost to Laigueglia. The sea is studded with little white-sailed yachts, canoes and motor-boats. Inside the town, caffès one had scarcely noted during the winter blossom out with bands and concerts and are filled with visitors eating *gelati*, *spumoni*, and *cassate*, or drinking their '*caffè espresso*.' The narrow Via Umberto Primo — nicknamed by the English 'the main drain' — swarms with young men in brilliantly coloured pyjamas. The shops are freshly stocked, and many of them display fantastically shaped bathing bladders of red india-rubber, some in the form of fishes, others fashioned like swans. And everywhere one sees pyjamas — purple pyjamas, blue pyjamas, pink pyjamas, striped pyjamas. So attached are the Italians to this form of costume that, despite the entreaties of the hotel-keepers, they often wear their pyjamas at dinner, and even dance in them afterwards. . . .

To the traveller familiar with a French or English *plage* the bathing at Alassio, from the spectacular point of view, is depressing. Any one expecting

to find dark-eyed houris tripping about on the sands in brightly coloured *maillots* would be doomed to disappointment. To begin with, unlike her brothers, the middle-class girl of northern Italy, in my experience, is rarely blessed with much charm or comeliness. For ten Apollos, with bronzed skin and rippling muscles, you will not encounter more than one passably good-looking female. And whereas the men are allowed to bathe in comfort in short drawers, the girls are forced, by Italian prudishness, to clothe themselves in thick, voluminous, and unbecoming garments of which the predominant colour is a dingy black. Their method of bathing is for a group of about a score to enter the sea together. They walk in up to their knees, form a circle, and bob up and down, uttering the while shrill screams of terrified delight. They can continue doing this for about two hours at a time.

Nothing could be more distinctively Italian than Alassio in its 'grand' season. The English visitor is discouraged by the hotel and *pension* keepers, because he usually wants a room to himself, while the Italian holiday-maker is content with part of a bed in a room containing four or five other people. The legend, so carefully disseminated from interested motives, that the climate is insupportable for the English in July and August, is without any foundation in fact. The sun is hot, particularly at midday, and a siesta is advisable after luncheon. No violent exercise should be attempted except very early in the morning or after five in the afternoon. But I have suffered far more from the hot, clammy days and suffocating nights of an English September heat-wave than — Diano Marina excepted — I

have ever suffered from the sun on the shores of the Mediterranean. At Alassio there is nearly always a breeze from the sea, and the nights are exquisite. From the climatic point of view I should imagine that in the summer it is precisely what the sun-starved Northerner most urgently requires. I am of the minority who hold that with the aid of warm houses and warm clothes the English winter is supportable. It is the English summer — but enough!

III

Like all the older Italian towns, Alassio was built by men who — if ignorant of nineteenth-century 'hygiene' — thoroughly understood their own climate. It turns its back on the sea and its tall stone mansions are huddled closely together, thus protecting themselves equally against cold winds and the heat of the midday sun. Its narrow, stone-paved main street is always cool at the hottest hour of the hottest day, and the dark, cave-like shops with which it is lined on either side are singularly inviting after the glare of the sands. Some of the side streets are mere tunnels, through which one gets a glimpse of a sea of deepest blue. They may not seem healthy to Northern eyes; but at least they enable the inhabitants to walk about the town and do their business without discomfort. So narrow are the arteries of the old *città* that it is almost impossible in them for two donkey-carts to pass one another, and all motor traffic has to be diverted to the broad and dusty *Viale* Hanbury which sweeps round Alassio in a half-circle. Beyond the *Viale* Hanbury, and also in the direction

of Santa Croce on the one hand and Laigueglia on the other, new suburbs have sprung up. And the lower slopes of the rugged hills which rise at the back of the town are studded with villas, pink, yellow or blue, many of which are half smothered in masses of maroon-coloured bougainvillea. These mostly belong to English people and very attractive they look in their setting of olives, chestnuts or acacias.

On the seaward side of Alassio is a broad promenade, the famous *Passeggiata*, which on summer evenings is crowded with people. Most of the caffès have great red-brown awnings stretching right across to the parapet above the sands; others protect their tables with large circular umbrellas. From the middle of July to the end of August a roaring trade in ices is done on the sea front, and various forms of entertainment are provided for those who wish to spend an hour or two discussing them. One caffè has an excellent *al fresco* music-hall performance, another a party of banjoists in striped shirts and white ducks, who, in between the fox-trots, take it in turns to sing sentimental songs. The whole scene combines Latin vivacity with an intense respectability which puts even Bournemouth in the shade. It is rare to see an Italian touching alcohol except at meals, and even then he is sparing with the wine and lavish with the water.

For those who want to dance there are two or three large halls with much-advertised jazz-bands. The most popular of these is a big wooden châlet built over the beach, called the Lido di Alassio. In their own style the Italians dance admirably, and

English women find the men irresistibly attractive partners. It is a common sight to see Englishmen in dinner-jackets and stiff shirts sitting moodily over their whiskies-and-sodas, watching the girls they have brought with them 'gyrate' all the evening with good-looking chauffeurs and shop-assistants. The rhythmic walk which constitutes the average Englishman's dancing does not appeal to Italian girls; and even if it did, most Englishmen, of the type usually found in Alassio, would think it beneath their dignity to pick up a 'native' under the eyes of their own womenfolk. So they sit and gnaw their moustaches and wait for the walk home, under the stars. Stimulated by the flashing eyes, the dazzling teeth, the wavy hair and the sensuous movements of their Italian partners, the starchiest English miss doubtless has her sentimental moments; and, as we all know, everything comes to those who are not in a hurry. . . .

In July and August, the English miss and her goggle-eyed male escort and her plump and garrulous mamma disappear almost entirely from the scene, their place being taken by Italian holiday-makers of unquenchable vivacity whose dancing is a delight to the eye. I used to watch it by the hour together, without any feeling of boredom. Sometimes I danced with one or other of the Italian girls staying at the inn; but, although they were too polite ever to refuse me, I did not care to inflict my poor dancing upon them except when no better partner presented himself. Conversation on these occasions was a little difficult, owing to the sketchy and spasmodic nature of my Italian. Whenever I encountered a specially attractive girl I vowed to

myself that on the following morning I would begin to learn the language 'seriously.'

IV

To learn a language 'seriously' and to pick it up are two very different things. Most of us who have been forced in youth to acquire some knowledge of Latin, and sufficient French for practical purposes, can pick up a few words of Spanish and Italian without very much trouble. One can get the gist of the news by reading an Italian, Spanish, or Catalan newspaper; and when one's ear has become accustomed to the sound of the language one can understand a good deal of what is said. But really to *learn* a foreign tongue — with phrase-book and dictionary and steady application! Ah, that requires a courage and tenacity of purpose which only the great and good possess. I have bought many phrase-books and quite a number of dictionaries, but never yet have I been able to manage the 'steady application.' Travellers' phrase-books, moreover, have an interest of their own which lures away one's attention from the matter in hand.

It was in the dining-room of a tiny *fonda* in Mallorca that I first discovered their charm. On the table was a tattered Spanish-English phrase-book, which belonged, I think, to the *fondista's* son. It promised to teach the guileless Spaniard how to speak idiomatic English in a fortnight, and gathered together at the beginning of it were a few of those absolutely essential English phrases without a knowledge of which it was alleged to be unsafe for him to land at Dover. I was feeling

rather ill and completely dejected, but the first remark which met my eye cheered me considerably: 'I have levitated myself,' it ran, 'with a profound pain in my kidneys.' I forget the Spanish equivalent, but I learnt it by heart, and used it the next day upon the *fondista* — who had a guilty conscience regarding the searching and corrosive nature of his wines — with shattering effect. The book contained many other equally apt and surprising observations, and I stole it out of the dining-room and used it as a bedside book for the remainder of my stay.

I have never come across any phrase-book since that was quite so rich and racy as this one; but a tiny pocket dictionary which I bought in Alassio — on one of the many occasions when I made a 'serious effort to learn Italian' — is not without its literary merits. The revelations of character in the brief dialogues with which the book opens are full of psychological interest. There is, for example, the odious young man who remarks, for effect: 'When I am twenty years old, I will turn soldier.' Not content with this, he continues: 'In two weeks' time my sister shall be sixteen.' The listener, annoyed by this silly observation, says crushingly: 'And mine has been eighteen last month.' As a final shattering retort, he adds, pointing to another boy, 'At the end of the year *his* grandfather shall be ninety-five.' That ends the conversation abruptly.

We then come to a fascinating little scene entitled '*Che Ora?*' which, if slightly touched up, would make an excellent music-hall sketch. A fat, elderly, and ill-tempered married woman, who has

been kept waiting half an hour, has an argument with her husband. They wrangle and nag in a most ludicrously lifelike way, the question at issue being whether the time is one o'clock or two o'clock. The wife cross-examines in tones that positively ooze suspicion:

'What o'clock was it when you went out from home?'

'It was a quarter past eleven.'

'Was it so soon? And *what* have you been doing all that time?'

'I have paid a visit to one of my aunts.'

'And from your aunt's house you have employed but ten minutes?' (That's a likely one!)

And so they go on for a couple of pages.

The little dialogue at the inn, which follows, is a pleasant contrast. Two boon companions arrive with their servant, and decide to do themselves well. Their first remark is, 'Bring some warm water for washing and two bottles of good wine into our room, with a decanter of fresh water: we are very thirsty.' They know how to live, these two. They like plenty of good wine, but they are sticklers for cleanliness as well, as witness their next command: 'Anthony, listen: be present when they put the sheets on our beds, to be sure that they are clean.'

The dictionary proper, since the little book is intended for the waistcoat-pocket, contains only such English words, with their Italian equivalents, as are presumed to be in constant use. It may be that my knowledge of my native tongue is rudimentary, but certainly among the *a*'s are many words which stump me completely — to 'abalien-

ate,' for example. I confess I have never consciously abalienated any one or anything. Neither have I ever raised any 'abjection,' nor fallen into a fit of it. (The Italian for 'abjection,' for the benefit of the learned, is *viltà*. Perhaps this may be a clue.) Again, what is an 'azote'? If I called the waiter and ordered, '*Azote, subito!*' what would happen? Would he bring it me on a plate, or is it an adjective? 'Ado,' after much pondering, I have been able to place. First of all I thought it was the name of a river, then it dawned on me that it was the second word in the title of one of Shakespeare's plays. Among the *b*'s the compiler had made a curious selection of words, but at least they are all recognizable: 'Blab . . . bishop . . . bitch' — and so forth. Some of them I cannot imagine a blameless spinster travelling to Florence having very much occasion to use: but one never knows. One *might*, of course, be overwhelmed by a sudden temptation to blab about a bishop; and if so, it would be a comfort to be able to do it thoroughly!

But interesting as the dictionary is, it does not compare with the stimulating and provocative dialogues preceding it, from which I have quoted. Short as these are, they constitute a mine of inspiration, instruction and amusement. Many as are the miles that I have travelled upon Italian railways, I never — until I read the dialogue entitled 'Ferrovia' — realized exactly what would happen to me if I lost my ticket. Listen to this:

'Hold your ticket *quite* ready.'

'Why so?'

'Because it must be shown everywhere: at the door of the waiting-rooms, at the station we are

going to, and during the journey whenever the officials may ask for it.'

'And if I should happen to lose it?'

'You would have to pay your fare as if you had come from the very farthest place.'

I did not learn Italian at Alassio: but I was careful not to mislay my railway ticket.

V

For the Ferrovia del Stato I have always had a warm corner in my heart, and the portion of it between Ventimiglia and Genoa, which became in time almost as familiar to me as the 74 omnibus route from Camden Town to Baker Street, I grew to love with a warmth which one reserves as a rule for a human being. But then it *was* so human! It had its moods and vagaries, just like any cantankerous old lady. Sometimes the trains would be brisk, empty and on time. At others they would be fussy, temperamental, overcrowded, and hours late. Before Mussolini turned his attention to them I believe they used occasionally to go home in a huff and decline to run at all. But these little tantrums are no longer permitted. The trains do their job all right, albeit with no monotonous and servile precision. As with everything of the feminine gender, you never *quite* know.

The pleasures of going for a ride in a puff-puff have, alas, not even yet begun to pall on me; and from my headquarters at the Hôtel Torino I sallied forth on many agreeable excursions. The next town to Alassio, Albenga, though fly-ridden and not particularly healthy, is one of the most interesting places, historically, on the Ligurian coast. It lies

on a broad alluvial plain, with an amphitheatre of high mountains rising in the distance behind it. As one approaches the town its most noticeable features are the tall, square towers of red brick which soar above its roofs. Their colour is indescribably lovely: they look as if they had been warmed by centuries of burning sunshine, as indeed is the case. From the railway station, a long boulevard leads through an ugly suburb to the main entrance to the city. The outer sides of the outside ring of houses now form the city walls. The principal entrances are tunnels through the houses. Once within its network of narrow streets, the fascination of Albenga grows upon one, so much so that even the laziest traveller is impelled to go home to his bookshelf and discover something about the vicissitudes through which the place has passed.

The earliest-known city on this spot appears to have been the capital of the Ingauni, a Ligurian tribe which the Romans attacked and defeated at the end of the second Punic War. The native inhabitants were expelled and the place became a Roman city of considerable importance. In 409 it was destroyed by Alaric, King of the Visigoths, but it revived again in the reign of the Emperor Honorius, one of whose generals, Flavius Costanzius, rebuilt it on its present site. Costanzius' first care — so it is supposed — was to erect the famous baptistery, a beautiful octagonal building which stands close to the cathedral. It is hard to find and difficult of access, but well worth seeing. Although built in the fifth or sixth century, and for Christian use, the materials with which it was constructed, to

judge by the carved capitals of the granite columns and other indications, were taken from some older pagan temple. In the arch of one of the window recesses, where stood the ancient altar, there is a very beautiful mosaic, made of small pieces of coloured glass, which represents the mystic lamb surrounded by doves and stars.

The original octagonal font which stood in the centre was removed in the sixteenth century. The remains of the font now seen there date only from 1588. A still more recent font stands in one of the semi-circular alcoves. The two stone coffins on either side of the entrance to the baptistery are supposed at one time to have held the *corpi santi* of the more revered bishops of Albenga. The antiquity of the baptistery can be gauged from the fact that its floor is now about fourteen feet below the level of the surrounding streets.

Another relic of Costanzius is the famous Ponte Lungo, which he built across the river Centa. Ten arches of the bridge still remain, but they are high and dry, for the river long ago changed its course and is now half a mile away, flowing under the remains of the old town wall.

The Cathedral of San Michele is full of interest. Owing to the many changes — additions and subtractions — which the fabric has undergone, it is now the strangest mixture of Gothic and Baroque. Its square, red-brick tower, surmounted by a pointed spire of coloured tiles, was added in 1453, but had to be extensively restored in 1585, when the floor-level of the building was raised no less than three metres to bring it to that of the adjacent streets. The cathedral continued to be restored and

added to until the eighteenth century. The interior with its painted ceiling and its square marble columns adorned with figures representing the cardinal virtues, is the most modern part of the fabric, and all the examples of early work are to be found on the exterior. (There are, for instance, some good early carvings on the façade facing the Piazza San Michele.) Mr. Frederic Lees in his admirable book 'Wanderings in Liguria' — a book which every one who intends to visit this district should buy and put in his suitcase before starting — describes some very beautiful illuminated manuscript books which he found in the cathedral library, among other neglected treasures. These, unfortunately, I did not see.

A happy hour or two can be spent in aimless loafing about Albegna's narrow streets, and on the banks of the river Centa. Everywhere things of interest meet the eye — a mediæval coat-of-arms carved over a doorway, the figure of a madonna and child standing in a niche on the façade of a dilapidated dwelling, or perhaps one of the square brick towers, built for civic uses, which rise up so unexpectedly out of ordinary houses.

About midway between Alassio and Albenga, and separated from the coast by perhaps half a mile of sea-water, rises the small pudding-shaped island of Gallinaria, which is well worth a visit. From the shore it looks bare and inhospitable, but this is deceptive. One side of it, the steepest, is thickly wooded, and all of the remainder which is not sheer rock is cultivated in terraces of corn and vines. On the summit, standing in a walled enclosure, is an old Benedictine monastery now turned into a

dwelling-house. There is also a small and rather ugly modern chapel, facing the mainland. Close to the island's miniature harbour is a cave, in which is a holy well which supplies the islanders with water. I was told that the whole property was to be let for two hundred pounds a year, an amount which I should have imagined that the farm alone would produce if properly managed. I rather wished, when I heard this, that I was one of those successful authors who can afford islands of their very own. Gallinaria would suit me admirably!

After Albenga the line continues to hug the coast. The train wanders dreamily along, stopping at a series of sunny little towns, most of which are thronged with bathers during the months of July and August. At several places I saw hordes of little city children from the slums of Milan being marshalled on the beach in military formation to take their sea and sun baths. The words 'Colonia Fascista,' painted in large letters on the roofs of the big wooden bathing châlets, were a reminder to the uninstructed that Fascist activities are not confined to dosing political opponents with castor oil. The children, their faces brown as chestnuts, looked the picture of happiness; and it was evident from the gestures and expressions of the women who had charge of them that the work was a labour of love.

The town of Ceriale, the next station after Albenga, though it looks placid enough to-day, has been through some stirring experiences. In 1637 it was sacked by Algerian and Tunisian pirates who carried off a number of the leading inhabitants as hostages. The commune had to raise on loan the then enormous sum of 16,000 lire, before they were

allowed to return to their homes. This debt was not finally paid off until the year 1800. Near Ceriale, some few miles inland, is Toriano, famous for its sanctuary and grotto of Santa Lucia and one of the oldest towns in Liguria. The French, in 1795, won a battle here against the Austrians and Sardinians. Three or four stations after Ceriale is Finalmarina, which, with the adjacent towns of Finalpia and Finalborgo, formed the ancient marquisate of Finaro.

Though Finalmarina has a poor beach, from the bathing standpoint, and rather a treacherous climate, and lacks the sleekness and prosperity of Alassio, it has a curious kind of charm of its own. As a sea-bathing resort it caters principally for the very poor. The columns of the 'Corriere della Sera' are full of advertisements every year, offering full *pension* here, during the summer, at incredibly low rates. I don't think any Milanese who could afford to go to Alassio would dream of going to Finalmarina. Nevertheless, the beach presents a scene of extraordinary animation and gaiety. It swarms with children, their papas and mammas and their older brothers and sisters, and they all seem to be enjoying themselves in that ecstatic way of which people who work hard for very little seem usually to have the secret. The town is a little dusty and dilapidated, but architecturally it has its grand moments. There are several magnificent *palazzi* and an imposing Baroque church, dedicated to San Giovanni Battista, and built from the designs of the great Lorenzo Bernini.

The interior, with its painted dome, square marble columns, its floridly carved marble pulpit,

and fantastic altars, is harmonious and has a grandeur about which there is something child-like and naïve. Other relics of past greatness are a Spanish triumphal arch at the eastern end of the town, and the great fortress of Castelfranco (now used as a prison), which stands high above the road to Finalpia.

Far more interesting from the æsthetic or architectural standpoint, however, than either Finalmarina or Finalpia is Finalborgo, which lies inland about three kilometres from the coast. It is reached by a ramshackle omnibus, built on the same lines as a tramcar 'trailer' and covered by a dusty awning of pink canvas, which starts from the central *piazza* of Finalmarina.

Finalborgo is a fascinating little walled town which has probably remained very much as it now is, at least for the past two centuries. It lies at the foot of two beautiful valleys, which are divided from one another by a mountain-spur which rises immediately behind it. A little way up the hillside there is a fortress, and a mile or so beyond it, crowning the hill, can be seen the one remaining tower of a ruined mediæval Castle. The omnibus stops just outside the town, and the traveller walks on foot over a bridge across the river Porro and through the main gateway into its narrow central street. Just inside the town gate on the left-hand side is the church of San Biagio, which has a very fine Baroque pulpit of white marble. The pulpit rests upon white marble clouds, which in turn are supported in the circumambient air by the breath of marble *putti*, whose cheeks are swollen by their exertions. Who shall describe the heart-rending

charm of this kind of art? Surely nobody with bowels could maintain a stern and unbending æsthetic code in face of such a thing, so skilful, so fantastic, so human, so laughable, so . . . How many travellers in Italy must have groped, as I am groping now, for the elusive revealing adjective — and similarly failed to find it! Much Italian Baroque art, which quite obviously is not even first-rate of its kind, gives me a small internal thrill, as if a naughty hand were lightly touching a heart-string. You cannot be angry with it because it is at once too pretty, too absurd, too joyously fantastic, too appealing. . . .

From the municipio, which stands in a small grass-grown *piazza* at the extreme end of the town, there begins a bridle-path called the Strada Beretta which zigzags up the hillside in a series of broad and shallow steps. As I had a few hours to spare before the train went, and guessed that the view from the hill would repay me for my toil, I set off up this path in the hot afternoon sun. After passing under a stone archway on which is carved the date 1666, I reached the Fort of San Giovanni. Leaving it on my right, I continued to follow the pathway which now traversed an expanse of waste land covered with bushes and stunted trees. Far below me on my right was a lovely valley with a torrent rushing down it towards the sea. Immediately ahead of me the ruined tower of the great castle stood out boldly against the skyline, and further in the distance was a line of mountain peaks. When I turned to look back I could see the roofs and towers of Finalborgo, bright in the sunshine, and beyond it the grey line of Finalmarina, and

then the azure sea. I hurried along the path, for I have not yet got over, and perhaps never shall get over, my childish passion for exploring ruins. The path skirted the walls of the castle about a hundred feet below them, and eventually brought me to a tiny hamlet consisting of two or three farms and a rather large church before whose unadorned cream-coloured façade grew four tall cypress trees. The effect of them, standing there like motionless green sentinels on either side of the church door, was indescribably lovely in the fading light. I knew that if I waited too long to look at this church and to admire the view of mountain and valley spread out before it, I might not have time enough to explore the castle, so I left it and tried to discover a pathway to the ruins. There did not seem to be one, so disregarding obstacles I pushed on through the courtyard of one of the farms and across a rough expanse of shrubs and undergrowth until at last I reached the castle. It was clear that in its heyday it had been a place of immense strength, a fortress and a vast dwelling-house combined. But the work of destruction had been done thoroughly, and nature had assisted. Trees, shrubs, grass and many kinds of flowers grew in indescribable profusion among the masses of fallen masonry. I made my way to the tower and walked round it. In front of it was a space clear of undergrowth and covered only with short grass. My footsteps sounded curiously hollow and just as I noticed this I happened to look down. It was as well I did so. In front of me was a square hole in the ground, quite large enough for me to have fallen through it. I got down on my knees and peered down, but could see noth-

ing. Then I got hold of a big stone and dropped it. It fell with a loud *plomp* into water which, at a guess, I should say was forty feet below me. I found three or four more of these square holes, but the stones I dropped into them fell on to a rocky floor. Evidently there were vast *sousterrains* waiting for investigation, and if I had only had a rope and a candle and a companion I should dearly have loved to explore them. Who knows what one might not have discovered? — hidden treasure, ancient documents, marble statues stored away for safety! However, I could do nothing without help, so I returned to the tower. It was tall and massive, constructed of faceted stone. Inside, the various floors had fallen away, and as I could discover no staircase in the thickness of the wall I was unable to climb to the top of it. It had evidently contained rooms which had been richly decorated, for on each floor, in the four corners, there still remained portions of the painted ceilings. The colours were as bright as if they had been painted yesterday. . . .

I could have spent hours scrambling about among these romantic ruins, but the evening shadows were beginning to fall caressingly over the whole beautiful scene and it was time for me to return. I made my way down a series of terraces planted with vines, till I regained the footpath. As I walked back in the evening coolness down into Finalborgo and thence along the dusty road to the railway station at Finalmarina, I tried to imagine what the castle must have looked like in the days of its glory, standing proudly there on the crest of its rocky hill, dominating the two valleys and the sea coast in front of it. It must have had four great

towers, one at each of its four corners, before it was dismantled — so much I had been able to gather from my own observation. And from its great extent it must have been able to house a population of several hundred people. But what was its name, and what its history? It did not appear to be a show place, in any sense, for there was no proper path to it, nor any indication that it was ever visited by tourists.

Its name was easy to discover. It was Castel Gavone, the ancient stronghold of the Del Carretto family, who held the marquisate of Finaro and governed their tiny kingdom as independent monarchs. It was some time before I could find out any more about it — Baedeker was reticent — and for the details which follow I am indebted once again to Mr. Frederic Lees. The castle, it appears, was built in 1181 by Enrico del Carretto II and added to in 1292 by the Marquis Antonio. Its position on a buttress of the Rocca di Perti, commanding two valleys leading to the sea, was immensely strong. Its ramparts commanded a view of the whole course of the river Porra as far as the sea, and also of all the three towns belonging to the marquisate. Two deep moats protected it, one in the rear, which was crossed by a drawbridge, the other in front. With its four great embattled towers and its naturally strong situation rendered doubly strong by all that military science could at that epoch devise, it is not to be wondered at that in the Middle Ages the castle was considered impregnable.

The Marquises of Finaro were constantly quarrelling with the neighbouring Republic of Genoa, and these quarrels came to a head in 1448 in the

days of the Marquis Biagio Galeotto, and resulted in open warfare. The Republic sent an army of fifteen thousand men, mostly arbalesters, to lay siege to Castel Gavone, their commander being a skilful soldier named Pietro Fregoso. Fregoso advanced as far as Finalborgo and quickly saw that it would be impossible to reduce Gavone unless he could obtain the services of a traitor and make a successful night attack. He was lucky in finding the man he wanted in Giacomo Pico, the favourite of the Marquis Biagio, who had been taken prisoner. Whether Pico was suborned by bribery or whether he had some obscure grudge against his protector, is not clear. In any case he consented to indicate to the Genoese a secret pathway by which they might reach the castle walls without being detected by the garrison. The night attack was made in February, 1449, and was successful, although the marquis contrived to escape unharmed down the castle wall and subsequently to reach the French frontier. After the reduction of the castle, Finalborgo was unable to hold out and was subdued in the following month. The town was then burnt and the castle dismantled. The Marquis Biagio Galeotto, after reaching France, took service in the French army and was killed in the same year. In 1452, his brother Giovanni del Carretto, the heir to the marquisate, succeeded, with French assistance, in driving the Genoese out of Finaro, rebuilt Borgo and restored Castel Gavone.

The Genoese were too much occupied with their own internal faction-fights to make a further attempt to capture Finaro, and the Del Carretto family enjoyed its honours undisturbed till 1588,

when the last of the marquises, Alfonso II, whose improprieties became intolerable, was driven out by his own enraged subjects. (One of Alfonso's habits was to ride down on horseback to a church at Finalpia which was held in special veneration by the Finalese, and allow his horse to slake its thirst at the holy-water stoup.)

In 1591, Finaro passed into the hands of Spain and entered on a period of prosperity which lasted till the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Spanish spent money lavishly on fortifications, and the Finalese were given the valuable privilege of free navigation to the ports of Spain and India. Commerce flourished apace and the district became one of the richest in Liguria. In 1713, however, the Emperor Charles VI sold the marquisate of Finaro to the Republic of Genoa for six million lire, and Genova la Superba at once set herself, with gusto, to destroy her dangerous rival. Castel Gavone was again dismantled and all the fortified places of the ancient marquisate were rendered useless, save only the forts of San Giovanni, above Finalborgo, and Castelfranco at Finalmarina.

A few miles beyond Finalmarina is Noli, a little town of great antiquity built on the shores of a beautiful bay and sheltered by an amphitheatre of hills. During the Roman domination of Liguria the townsfolk proved themselves particularly amenable to the Roman rule and in consequence the town enjoyed administrative liberty and was granted the privilege of exemption from payment of tribute. The Nolese were famous for their valour, and contributed many gallant soldiers to the Roman armies, among the most illustrious of whom were

the four soldier saints, Paragorio, Parteo, Partenopio, and Severino. These men were born in the reign of Diocletian, and after distinguished military careers received the crown of martyrdom on the 7th of September in the year A.D. 303. Noli has a great *festa* every year on the anniversary of their death.

San Paragorio is further commemorated by the fact that the little Romanesque basilica near the station, the *antica catedrale*, is dedicated to him. This beautiful little church, the oldest part of which is said to date from the ninth century, was classed as a national monument in 1890 and is carefully preserved. The interior contains three thirteenth-century tombs, some remains of early mural paintings and a curious wooden crucifix bearing a picture of Christ in a long tunic, which is said to date from the ninth century. Like the crucifix of La Sangré in Palma, this crucifix is held in special veneration. The crypt of the small cathedral contains details of sculpture and the remains of mural painting.

In mediæval times Noli was a small, independent Republic. It was protected by a great castle on the adjoining Monte Orsini and had no less than seventy-two lofty red-brick towers, from which the inhabitants kept a lookout for the dreaded Saracens. The town was known in consequence as the '*città delle settantadue torre.*'

The towers have nearly all been pulled down now. The few that remain, though reduced in height, are very attractive and add to the charm of the picture which the town presents. Leading up towards Monte Orsini is a winding mule-track, which begins in a series of steps and afterwards

runs along the face of the cliff overlooking the sea. It is, I think, one of the most beautiful paths I have ever trodden. On the homeward journey the views of the bay, of the Capo di Noli, and of the ancient town slumbering at one's feet, are really entrancing. Within its small compass Noli contains innumerable beauties. It is built for heat, its streets are narrow, shady and winding. Just inside its main gate are the Portici Umberti, a long and cool arcade which affords welcome relief from the glare of the sun. Noli is now principally a fishing town. In summer it has a certain number of visitors who come for the bathing, which I believe is excellent, but on the day of my visit it did not seem to be crowded. There is not, I fancy, enough accommodation for a crowd. I lunched at the Albergo Stazione, which appeared to be a clean and comfortable inn and remains in my memory because of the excellent white *vin ordinaire* — it was actually the colour of a very pale tawny port — which I consumed there. It was much better than many of the more pretentious wines which I drank at Alassio.

IV

CAPTAIN CHARLES

He was so *nice*, so good of his kind, so good-hearted, tactful, and considerate, that the temptation to save things from him, to tell him little white half-lies was scarcely to be resisted. He was the type of English soldier to be with whom melts the heart, and in so doing fogs the mental processes. You couldn't call him exactly bigoted, or perhaps it was that his manners were too fine to allow him to express any opinion in a bigoted kind of way. At the same time, had he discovered that any one whom he had begun by treating as an equal did not share his political views — the *credo* of his caste and type — he would have been as much hurt as by an exhibition of downright ill-breeding. The more friendly we became over our morning cocktails at the Caffè Vairo, the greater grew my qualms of conscience. Ought I to disillusion him? Ought my mild disagreements, my 'personally-I'm-not-quite-sures' and my 'well-I-don't-quite-know-about-thats' to be intensified, so that he would become aware that I held 'views' nearly all of which were in direct opposition to his own, and to those held by his family, his friends, his connections, and, in short, his world? I wouldn't have had him alter his own ideas for a moment. They were as much a part of him as was the weather-beaten manor house in a southern county where he and his forebears for many generations had been born and bred. His

type is disappearing, either becoming merged in other types or sinking downhill into decay and dissipation. Pure specimens of it are rare. My appreciation of Captain Charles was increased by this realization, so, indeed, was my disinclination to horrify him by the admission of beliefs which he would have considered mad or merely criminal. And I had no missionary spirit whatever. Good Heavens, I did not want to 'convert' him! Perish the thought. He was perfect as he was.

Our acquaintance ripened rather rapidly, and when a spell of hot weather came, he suggested that we should go up into the mountains for a few days and get some fresh air. I could hardly refuse — indeed, I did not want to refuse — but in imagination I saw those kind and clear blue eyes of his grow first bewildered and then a little hard and withdrawn, as if the mind at the back of them had closed its shutters. Well, it was no use meeting trouble halfway. I should just have to do my best to steer clear of dangerous topics and trust to luck.

We started off from Albenga on the day of the feast of Corpus Christi. The dilapidated motor diligence which was to take us up to Garessio was an hour and a half late in starting, perhaps because there was difficulty in finding any one to drive it. The man who eventually took the wheel was, I think, an amateur; for at least five times upon the perilous mountain road he was within an ace of toppling the entire 'bus over the precipice into the valley far below. If it had one or two rather painfully exciting moments, our journey to Garessio was yet one of the most delightful experiences which I have ever had in Liguria. The weather was

perfect, and our route took us through some of the most wonderful mountain scenery one could wish to set eyes upon. Each little village we passed, Cisano-sul-Neva, Zuccarello, and many more, was decorated with green branches for the *festa*, and most of the male population was engaged in playing bowls, while the women stood about in separate groups, engaged in their personal concerns. As we climbed higher and higher up the mountain slopes, the scenery began to lose its distinctively Italian character. The grass on the hillsides, covered for half the year under a mantle of snow, shone with a rich and vivid green. The olives became rarer, then stopped altogether, their place being taken by chestnuts, beech trees and larches. By our side a burn babbled its way over a stony bed, and the wild flowers grew increasingly plentiful. We reached at last the highest point on our journey, the Col di San Bernardo, which is about three thousand feet above the level of the sea. Here, on the top of a grassy mountain, exposed to all the elements, was a long, weather-beaten house, built of stone, and close to it a large and brand-new red hotel. The view from the windows of the hotel was so extensive as to be almost terrifying — mile upon mile of mountain and valley were outstretched before our eyes. We seemed to be on the roof of the world. In a high wind I could imagine that the place might be positively dangerous, one might be blown over the edge, down into the depths of the yawning valley. Charles and I stopped for a few minutes to have a whisky-and-soda each and to chat with the bearded proprietor, who spoke excellent English. He did not appear to have any guests, but

no doubt his rather restricted season had not yet begun. The chauffeur blew his horn impatiently, while we were finishing our drinks, so we hurried off. The descent to the series of villages which constitutes Garessio was quickly accomplished, and we set about looking for the hotel which had been recommended to us by the Anglo-American Agency in Alassio. It stood a little way back from the main road, a big villa set in a most delightful garden full of roses and of other very English-looking flowers and shrubs. There was nobody about at the moment of our arrival, and our first thought was that we had the place to ourselves. We were quickly disillusioned, however, on being ushered into the dining-room. For there, collected together, were about two dozen of the plainest and most aggressively virtuous of our fellow country-women. As we entered the room a hush fell over it, while the elderly spinsters, some of whom must have spent nearly half a century in hotels and *pensions*, subjected us to their expert appraisement. Finally, one of them, in a terribly 'sweet' voice, bent across the table and said, 'Have you been to Wembley yet, Miss Jenkins?' After that the play of knife and fork was everywhere resumed. The food, as I have often found to be the case in the hotels and *pensions* which are stormed and occupied by the 'Miss Harriets,' was soggy and indigestible. I don't suppose any Italians ever went to this hotel, and the only other male besides ourselves, at the time of our visit, was an ancient English clergyman.

Charles was mildly amused by his surroundings, and, I think, rather pleased to see so many compatriots. He usually referred to the Italians as

'these chaps.' They were 'natives,' and it was slightly lowering to live among them at too close quarters. He was really not happy in a Continental town which could boast no English colony any more than he was happy in an hotel which the English did not frequent.

In regard to the hotel at Garessio I did not feel it necessary to give way to him. In fact I struck. 'It's no good, Charles,' I said, after luncheon, as we sat in deck chairs in the delightful garden, 'I simply can't breathe in this place. These people's "atmosphere" suffocates me. I can stand almost anything human except a good woman. Now there's a little pub on the main road just near here, called the Albergo del Giardino, which I noticed when we arrived. It looked quite decent. I'm going to investigate.' He grinned at me indulgently, and I investigated. I found that this inn had most of the qualities which a village inn ought to possess. On the ground floor there was a large bar-parlour, furnished with wooden chairs and settles and round wooden tables. On the floor above was a long dining-room whose windows opened on to a delicious, unexpected garden, behind which rose, in all their splendour and beauty, the Ligurian Alps. The innkeeper, his wife and his daughter were friendly, unsophisticated people, and they showed me two excellent bedrooms overlooking the garden. Charles didn't like our changing hotels in such a marked manner, but he allowed himself to be persuaded, upon my promising to undertake the task of lying politely to the *padrona* and settling the bills.

Garessio is a long, straggling place which lies in

the valley of the Tanaro, surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery. It is not such a recognized resort as Ormea, which lies higher up the valley, but a good many English residents in Liguria visit it in the summer months, to escape the heat and the overcrowding of the coastal towns. For some reason, despite the virtues of the Albergo del Giardino, I could not get to like Garessio and was glad to leave it. We went first of all down the lovely Tanaro Valley to the little town of Ceva, which has a station on the newly electrified main line between Turin and Savona. The tiny trains on the single line between Ormea and Ceva do not hurry themselves, and afford one ample opportunities of admiring the scenery. If only we had had rucksacks and been on foot I should have liked to linger at such favoured spots as Nucetto and Bagnasco, both of which have imposing ruined castles. But the train bore us on, slowly, indeed, but relentlessly.

Of Ceva I cannot think without experiencing a little thrill of affection. It hasn't, so far as I am aware, anything at all to recommend it. There is no reason in the world why any travellers other than commercial travellers should visit it, and I don't suppose that any do. Some towns have a natural innocence, an unconscious, virginal quality, and Ceva is one of them. Of great antiquity, it huddles together in the usual Italian fashion, making a rough circle round its central *piazza* and its *municipio*. Perhaps its most surprising feature is a high and naked-looking cliff, with the remains of a citadel upon its summit, which towers above the town.

The river Tanaro, emerging near Ceva from a

long and beautiful gorge, winds itself untidily round the place. The principal street is arcaded on both sides, and the town is evidently a busy shopping and banking centre. On the evening of my arrival I bought a small bottle of a stuff called Arquebuse, made by the monks of a mountain monastery in the district. I was led into this error by the promises on the label of the bottle, which detailed its remarkable virtues. Not only was it unsurpassed for the stomach and digestion, but it was also a styptic and a disinfectant. After one teaspoonful of this evil and ill-smelling fire-water I could believe it capable of anything. I gave some to Charles, who choked and swore abominably. Later, the bottle was smashed in my bedroom at Alassio by a careless maid, and the room stank for days afterwards. I have tasted some potent mountain liqueurs in my time — *grappa*, for example, and the Tyrolean *entian* which you get in the Arlberg Valley, and home-made *marc* — but never anything which, for sheer corrosiveness, could hold a candle to Arquebuse.

There were not a great many excitements at Ceva, and I would not recommend the place to the jaded pleasure-seeker. Its two principal cafés are rather grim and uninviting. Both have billiard-tables in their *penetralia*, round which perspiring gentlemen in shirt-sleeves spend their virtuous evenings. There were notices up on the walls urging the Fascisti to maintain an 'iron discipline,' and many election exhortations to the inhabitants, such as '*Votate la lista!*' I am sure the good people of Ceva did as they were told: they looked unusually docile.

The hotel at which we stayed, the Corona Grossa, was clean, comfortable and very cheap. To get to the bedrooms one had to traverse an enormous kitchen, and I was tackled on the way upstairs by the chef, who seemed anxious to display his French and consulted us at great length about our dinner. To all of his suggestions we agreed; but the dinner, when it was served to us, was a poor enough affair after all. We had anticipated a positive debauch of rustic good-living.

After a night at Ceva we returned up the Tanaro Valley by train to Ormea. Ormea is an interesting old town, more compact than Garessio and still more finely situated. All round it on all sides rise lofty mountains, their lower slopes clothed in most cases with thick woods. The Tanaro, here a smaller stream than at Ceva, flows past the town and is joined on its way by several little brooks, which come bubbling towards it down the valleys. We found an hotel just outside the confines of the town, which looked very attractive. In front of it was a garden full of flowers and fruit trees, which was bounded by a mountain stream whose babbling made a pleasant accompaniment to conversation. We had evidently anticipated the Ormea season by some weeks. Our hotel was quite empty and there were hardly any visitors in the place beside ourselves. A few there were, however. In the biggest hotel, an establishment which likes to describe itself as first-class, we discovered sitting in the lounge three or four Englishwomen of great antiquity and the venerable clergyman whom we had seen some days earlier at Garessio. Their complete and utter boredom was infectious, and after glancing at them

I could have howled like a dog for very misery. Charles and I departed hastily, and hurried back to the slightly gayer atmosphere of the small café at the back of the Palazzo Municipale.

I can imagine no more suitable spot for an extremely tedious honeymoon than Ormea, and I began in imagination to people our deserted hotel with agonized couples, counting the hours till they should be released to return to their homes and normal occupations. It is a great mistake to go to a place like Ormea without a large supply of new and interesting books. Charles and I had none, so that between dinner and bedtime we had no alternative but to exchange confidences about our very different lives. During the day, things were not so bad, for the walks are many and varied, and the air magnificent. One afternoon, feeling more energetic than my companion, I went off after luncheon to follow up the little brook which flowed round the gardens of the hotel. It was rough going, but in about ten minutes I found myself in a secluded valley of such paradisal loveliness that I gasped for very joy. Never in my life before have I been in a spot more entrancing. A rough path led through the woods, a few hundred feet above the stream, which bubbled its way below me through a rich green meadow. There was evidently a village, or at least a few cottages, at the head of the valley, so I pushed on eagerly. The richness of the vegetation was extraordinary, and I have rarely seen grass so green or trees so beautifully adorned in their summer foliage. There were groves of beeches, chestnuts, and acacias on both sides of the valley, and growing close to the stream were occasional poplars. Hare-

bells and Michaelmas daisies and many other flowers grew in great profusion.

When I was halfway up the valley I found the narrow pathway entirely blocked by a large cream-coloured cow, with mild and melancholy brown eyes. The cow looked at me, and I looked at the cow. She displayed not the faintest inclination to move. On one side of us was a precipice, on the other an unscalable rock. Well, if I kept very close to the cow there *was* just room for me to squeeze by. But would the cow remain perfectly good?

Now I am amiably disposed towards cows. I have always wished them well and sympathized with them in their great depression; but of their habits and dispositions I am completely ignorant. In England one usually meets them in a nice big field with plenty of space all round them. The rusticating Londoner is seldom brought into close and familiar contact with cows, so that he has few chances of learning to be at ease in their company, and to understand their manners and customs. I had no idea how good this cow was likely to be when I squeezed past her. However, there was no alternative but to hope for the best. Holding out my arms over her back, without actually touching her, so that if she were minded to do me a mischief I might cling on, I negotiated my passage into safety. The kind cow never blinked an eyelash, but when I had got by, she turned her head and fixed me with a wondering stare.

An entirely uninterested witness of the cow and precipice episode was the young girl who was in charge of the animal. She was sitting under a tree,

with a large black umbrella by her side, busily knitting, and did not look up as I passed. Later on I met several other cows grazing on the hillside, each with a girl or woman to look after them. At sundown they would negotiate, one after another, the rocky path to the village in order to be milked. Then woman and beast would enter the same rude cottage and sleep under the same roof.

The village — its name, I discovered, was Valdarmella — was one of the wildest and most primitive imaginable. The bridle-track which led to it was difficult going, even in summer. In winter the place must have been almost completely cut off. It stood at the top of the valley, on a wooded mountain slope, and so well was it concealed that until I was only a few hundred yards away I did not see it. It was a mere collection of stone huts, with rough wooden verandahs in front of them. At one end was a tiny barnlike church, which looked poverty-stricken and dilapidated. The place was locked up, but through a hole in the door I saw the yellow gleam of a sanctuary lamp illuminating a crude image. One of the strangest things about Valdarmella was its silence. As I walked along the rough, uneven track which led from house to house, I did not encounter a single living thing. There was no sign of man, woman, child or domestic animal. It was entirely deserted. I pushed on past the village up the hillside, through a lovely grove of beech trees, until I began to grow weary and sat down to smoke a cigarette. As I struck the match something impelled me to look up, and I saw far above me standing on a projecting rock a group of villagers with two dogs. They were eyeing me in-

tently. No doubt my progress up the valley had been watched and commented on; and though I had seen no one in the village, I had myself been seen. I think the cigarette must in some way have convinced them of the honesty of my intentions, for after I had been smoking for a minute or two the group faded away.

It was time for me to return to my companion, and I retraced my steps, reluctantly, to Ormea. In the exquisite light of the late afternoon the valley looked even more extravagantly beautiful than when I had first entered it. The discovery of Valdarmella remains as one of my happiest memories of the Ligurian Alps.

Charles had to get back to Alassio to meet a sister-in-law, so we cut short our visit to Ormea after two days and took the motor diligence over the Col di San Bartolomeo and through Pieve di Teco to Oneglia. I should like to have been able to stop in Pieve di Teco, which looked picturesque and interesting. It stands on the left bank of the Arroscia, is a place of some importance in the district, has a garrison of soldiers who occupy an old convent on its northern outskirts, and is a centre of the shoemaking industry. The 'bus rattled down the long narrow street with arcades on either side which cuts the town in two, and drew up before the Caffè Patrio, a dark, cavernous place, where we regaled ourselves with bad beer. I just had time to look inside the parish church, which is an imposing Baroque building built from the plans of Gaetano Cantoni. The interior, with its painted columns and its painted dome, is harmonious and attractive, and the church contains a number of excellent

pictures. Pieve must at one time have been a great religious centre. It had numerous convents and monasteries, the buildings of most of which are now turned to secular uses; and on the façades of many of its ancient houses are queer shrines and old religious paintings. There was a very curious old painting outside the Caffè Patrio, but it was too dark for me to be able to discover its subject.

I was just congratulating myself on having so well arranged matters, on having kept so careful a guard upon my tongue that Charles and I had been able to enjoy one another's company without disturbing the depths of our political disagreements, when all at once the fat, so to speak, fell into the fire. The disaster happened midway between Pieve di Teco and Oneglia, when my friend, forsaking general principles — about which I was prepared to differ from him gently, or in silence — quite innocently embarked on personalities. How often have I done the same thing myself! I have talked to acquaintances light-heartedly about Lloyd George and Asquith and Lord Grey and Winston, and given my unvarnished and sometimes unflattering opinion about those public and popular figures. I have never met any of them in the flesh, and have safely assumed that none of the people I discussed them with had done so either.

But with the advent of a Labour Government the case was different. Like many other individuals equally obscure, I discovered to my amazement that, for a few months at all events, I belonged to the governing classes. In one way or another I had come into some sort of personal contact with most of the leading members of the Labour Cabi-

net, and with a good many of the better-known Labour M.P.'s. I was, I suppose, in much the same position in regard to the Labour Ministers as some unimportant member of the Carlton Club would be to the Tory Cabinet when the Tories are in power. It was an odd thought.

The changed situation was sharply brought home to me when Captain Charles, who had got hold of a copy of the 'Morning Post' at Ormea, suddenly began talking about 'that swine Morel.' He went on about Morel having been in somebody's 'pay' for a long time — first it was the Germans' and now, I think, the Bolsheviks' — and remarked that the 'feller was a damned traitor, anyway,' and that they ought to have shot him during the war instead of only putting him in gaol — and so forth. This was really more than flesh and blood could stand. For I had met Morel, his family circle, and many of his political associates. I had been to his home and had had constant opportunities of observing him, and I didn't consider myself a worse judge of character than my neighbours. Large of person and of heart, honest as the day, courageous to a fault, an unremitting worker for the causes in which he believed, passionately fond of his garden and his roses, Morel was one of those exceptional men who may be said to restore one's faith in human nature. I was not going to stay silent while my companion abused him. And so, to the gallant Captain's amazement, I defended E. D. M. for kilometre after kilometre, until the old 'bus came to a full stop outside Oneglia station. I fancy he must have thought me demented. 'Every one' knew what sort of man Morel was; just as 'every

one' knew that if we left India there would not be a virgin or a rupee left in the whole of Bengal inside six weeks; just as 'every one' knew that the way to cure unemployment in England was to prohibit strikes and make the Germans pay up; just as 'every one' knew that the only way to obviate war was to increase armaments. There were no two opinions to be held on all these points, for persons like himself.

Charles, as I have remarked before, was perfect of his kind. He belonged to that small caste of soldiers and country gentlefolk for which there is no label, but which most English people recognize at once. It has many imitators, and there are innumerable faked copies of it on the social market. The genuine article has all the subtle charm and grace of a portrait by Gainsborough. Imagination, or a love of the arts and a gift of expression such as is possessed by eminent soldiers like Sir Ian Hamilton or Lord Thomson are disqualifications for membership. The Charleses do not seek eminence in their profession, and in the modern world could not, fortunately, attain it even if they did. They have, of course, no monopoly of good manners or fine breeding; they do not constitute our 'upper classes,' but only a tiny section of them; and even among soldiers they are a minority. But within their narrow limits they are wholly to be admired. You know where you are with them and how they will act in any given situation. They are essentially men's men. To their wives their very uprightness is often an agony; and many women have been driven to the verge of suicide by their inflexibility and obtuseness. Inimitable creatures, and oh, how English!

Perhaps I got a little sentimental about Charles as the result of comparing him with the Celtic warriors described in the works of Sapper and John Buchan. I couldn't imagine Charles remaining longer than five minutes in any club to which Bull-Dog Drummond belonged. On the other hand, he would have thought that 'the feller's ideas' were sound enough. . . .

My display of hero-worship in regard to Morel led to the inevitable comment: 'But surely *you* don't agree with these chaps?' To which I could only reply that in the main I agreed with them absolutely.

Charles chuckled and said, 'Well, I'm blessed!' and we changed the conversation. But as I talked about the fast-approaching *festa* at Alassio, and about the cooking at the Hôtel Méditerranée I watched his eyes, and sure enough they had in them that withdrawn look that I knew so well. The shutters were up.

V

PROPRIÉTAIRE–AGRICULTEUR

I

At the château, luckily for me, I found a domestic who could talk French. We were scarcely ten kilometres away from Cannes, but all the peasants we had so far encountered spoke a language unintelligible both to the chauffeur and to myself. 'The farm of Monsieur Luke?' [1] remarked the servant, in answer to my rather agonized inquiry. 'Why, there it is! Do you see that yellow house across the valley? That is the house of Monsieur Luke. But you won't be able to reach it in the car. You will find a little pathway on the right-hand side of the drive, just before you come to the road.' I had spent two hours already in a vain search for my friend Luke's Provençal retreat, and it was a comfort to have discovered it at last. It was a hot afternoon and the journey from the Italian frontier had been grilling. I looked forward to a bath and a bottle of wine.

But supposing Luke had not received my telegram? It was odd that he had not met me at the station. No bandit chief could have owned a more inaccessible retreat, and he could hardly have expected a sleek Cannes chauffeur to find the way to it unguided. We turned back up the drive towards the bumpy *route vicinale*, and searched for the pathway, but without success. I was impatient and

[1] The late Luke Hansard, of Maugins.

could wait no longer. I knew now where the house was, and I set out for it, plunging down recklessly into the tangled undergrowth. The brambles tore my clothes, and my shirt grew damp with sweat, but somehow I reached the bottom of the valley, crossed the dry bed of a stream and found myself at last on the lowest *planche* of my friend's property. The sight of his vines reminded me once more of my intolerable thirst. I climbed up from terrace to terrace until at last I reached the old yellow house. My arrival was greeted with loud barking, by two enormous Alsatian wolf-hounds, who looked quite capable of tearing me limb from limb. 'Hullo!' I shouted. 'Luke, old man, where are you?' No answer came to me. I went round to the front of the house, where there was a pebbled courtyard with two shady lime trees in the midst of it. A cosy-looking deck-chair waited invitingly in the shadow of the trees. Bounding the courtyard on the side opposite the house was a large barn, at right angles to which was the laundry. A fox-terrier bitch put her nose through a hole in the door of the barn and looked at me beseechingly, giving a heart-rending whine. I knocked at Luke's front door, but, as I expected, there was no reply. I tried it: it was locked!

I had just resigned myself to returning ignominiously to Cannes when I saw an elderly peasant-woman, in a wide straw hat with a high crown, descending the pathway from a cottage which stood just above my friend's property. I called to her and she came scurrying towards me. Yes, there was no doubt of it, Monsieur Luke was away. The *patron* might return to-night or to-morrow. It was

the national *fête, le quatorze juillet.* Doubtless the *patron* was spending the day with his friends. . . . (If I knew anything of Luke, that was precisely what he *would* be doing. I pictured him lowering litres of the good red wine, in honour of the Republic, in the café of the nearest village.) 'Doubtless,' the good woman went on, 'the telegram which awaits Monsieur Luke is from Monsieur?' When I explained that it probably was the one which I had despatched from Alassio the previous morning, announcing my arrival, the good woman became all solicitude. She offered to cook me some dinner and to bring me down a bottle of wine from her cottage, and when 'Monsieur Pierre,' the *patron's* servant, arrived she promised to get the key of the house from him and to make a bed up for me. Together we walked along the pathway — the one which I had been unable to find — to where the chauffeur waited impatiently with my suitcases. . . . My luggage was brought along to the house, and in due course I was provided with a bottle of red wine and a thick tumbler. I lay back in Luke's chair, which I had moved round to the back of the house, took a deep draught of the wine and gazed, enchanted, at the rugged outlines of the distant Esterels. The lucky old devil! I envied him with all my heart.

II

An hour later the Alsatians who, for a wonder, had accepted me as a friend, jumped to their feet, barked with delight, and scampered away at the sound of a familiar footstep. 'Here is Luke,' I thought. But it was not Luke. A little barefoot

man in an ancient soft felt hat, which, though dilapidated, was recognizably English in shape, a dirty collarless shirt and frayed trousers came lurching round the house, and gazed at me with deep suspicion. Close behind him came the cottage woman, who explained that this was Monsieur Pierre, Luke's man. I shook Monsieur Pierre by the hand, but not even the sight of my suitcases quite convinced him that I had no evil designs upon his adored *patron*. Pierre and my protectress argued together, in a strange patois, with considerable heat. I gathered that Pierre was being told to behave himself and to do the honours of the house. In a few moments he lurched off. Then he returned and beckoned me to follow. I followed. We went to the barn, and Pierre opened the door of a hutch containing about twenty rabbits. He looked at me inquiringly and I gathered that he was asking me to choose which victim should be slaughtered for my dinner. As I seemed reluctant to make a decision in the matter, he stood musing for a moment, then his hand shot out and he seized by the ears a pure white rabbit that seemed to me much too young and innocent to be sacrificed. Pierre pinched it, said it was tender, caught it by its hind legs and swung it head-downwards. As we left the barn the little creature kicked convulsively, uttered one agonized squeal, and then was silent.

Under the lime trees, Pierre felt in his trousers' pocket for his pocket-knife, and as I turned to escape I saw him give the rabbit two or three little taps on the back of its neck with the closed knife. Alas, I was not to be allowed to return to my contemplation of the beauties of the Esterels. 'Mon-

sieur,' called Pierre gruffly. He had opened the large blade of his knife and cut a long slit in the rabbit's fur, preparatory to skinning it. He motioned to me to clutch the creature's hind legs, while its fur and its bowels were being removed. I think Pierre called me in to this job largely out of politeness and a desire to amuse me. He himself evidently enjoyed his messy task, and kept up a continuous chuckling until it was over. Later, as I washed the blood off my hands, I thought once again of the advantages of a vegetarian diet.

Dinner was served to me an hour after sunset in Luke's low-ceilinged, red-tiled sitting-room. The candles in tall brass candlesticks, which stood on either side of me on the dark polished table, cast a flickering illumination on the books and pictures and on the great open fireplace. It was an attractive room, very atmospheric, very like Luke. As I had been starved of books for several months, I looked forward to choosing an armful from the bookshelves and retreating quickly to bed with my candle. But the attentions of Luke's retainer, who had now, it seemed, accepted me without reserve, were embarrassing. The cottage woman upbraided him, ordered him to leave Monsieur tranquil and to allow him to eat his dinner in peace. But it was the *quatorze juillet* and Pierre — or Piètro, to give him his real name — had dallied for some time in the wine-cellar to celebrate it, and he felt amiable. He talked to me of many things, while I strove in vain to swallow portions of the unfortunate rabbit which, before my arrival, had played so blithely with his brothers and sisters. Whenever I tried to

eat a bit of him, I thought of his little nibbling, sensitive nose and his pathetic ears and his soft white fur, and the little scream he gave when he knew that he was doomed. . . .

Piètro was talking now in his own language. I learnt afterwards that Piètro had a language which was in the strictest sense his own, for no one in the world spoke it save himself and his employer. It was chiefly an uncouth Piedmontese patois. On to this had been grafted a number of words and phrases derived from several other obscure Italian dialects, which he had picked up during his military service. And the whole thing was peppered over with French, and served to the world heavily muffled by a grey moustache. Occasionally I caught a distinguishable growl — '*Ah, c'est un brave type, le patron!*' — then he would relapse again into his private language, and I could only guess at his meaning. We finished the red wine, and wished one another luck, clinking our glasses. Then Piètro went off to find his dilapidated bed, and to gather the dogs about him. The bed usually occupied one of the cellars under the house, but this evening he brought it out and placed it in the courtyard under the lime trees. I watched him cast himself upon it, still wearing his hat. Henriette, the fox-terrier bitch, curled up at his feet, and Norah and Matthieu, the Alsatians, lay down gracefully on either side of him.

I took my tall candlestick and wandered about, choosing books from the shelves. But for some reason I felt too restless to go to bed, and throwing open the shutters in one of the rooms at the top of the house, I leant over the window-sill and looked

across the glimmering valley, over which the moon had spread a pathway of silver, to where the golden lights of Grasse twinkled halfway up the hillside. Every now and then a toad calling to its mate uttered its treble love-note, and the 'dry cicadas' kept up their endless rasping. Heaven over heaven rose the night! I tried to recall 'Mariana in the South,' a poem which I loved as a small boy and have frequently re-read — if not with the old romantic rapture, at all events with much appreciation — but the familiar stanzas continually eluded me. The fitful breeze played through the leaves of the olive trees, making a sound that in colour was ashen grey; and from far off — to remind me that I was in a land of bandits — came the sound of two revolver shots. . . .

III

I had a further reminder that I had come to a land where bandits are common objects of the countryside on the following morning. I was sitting writing letters at Luke's table when the sound of voices made me look up. Through the partly open shutters appeared the barrels of two revolvers, pointed at my brains. Now brains — as the reader may well have guessed already — are not my strong point, and the few with which I have been endowed are precious to me. I was planning how to remove myself from the room as unobtrusively as possible, when suddenly the shutters were flung back and the ferocious face of my host was revealed to me through the window. His lips were drawn back over his teeth, his chin was thrust forward and his eyes gleamed 'balefully.' (This, I believe, is the

word.) He looked, in fact, precisely like one of those ferocious assassins whose pictures so regularly ornament the front page of the 'Éclaireur' and of the 'Petit Niçois.' Fortunately he recognized me just before pulling the triggers of his lethal weapons, and the massacre did not take place. . . .

Luke stuffed his guns back into his pockets, and negotiating the window-sill with considerable agility for a man of thirteen stone with a game leg, lowered himself into the room, shook me by the hand and roared with laughter. He clapped his hands for Elisa — the fat maid-of-all-work who (though she had turned up in time to cook my breakfast) was chiefly remarkable for her disinclination to do anything, save sit in a deck-chair and think about her lover — and commanded her to bring wine and glasses. 'That old rascal Piètro!' cried Luke. 'All he told me was that there was a stranger in the house! Thought you might be one of those damned *huissiers* they send along sometimes; or else a rival bandit, plundering my stronghold.' Piètro had watched this scene through the window and observed the handshakings. I think he was disappointed. He would have enjoyed helping Luke to bury the body, and I fancy he would also have liked a little disembowelling, just to keep his hand in. Since there was to be no funeral, Piètro entered the room with his ancient hat on the back of his head — it had been bought, that hat, in Saint James's Street, and was a relic of Luke's dashing days in London — and prepared to take part in the sacred rites of hospitality. Elisa brought in the decanter and the glasses: we clinked and wished each other luck. I produced my telegram and we

consigned to perdition the telegraph authorities of Italy and of France.

I had not seen Luke for nearly a year, and I gazed at him with all the respect due from one who has tried to break away — and failed — for one who has achieved his purpose. While he talked Piètro's patois, or growled to Elisa in guttural Provençal French, it was difficult for an observer to find many traces of the conventional pattern which four years at Winchester, and four more at Cambridge, had at one time stamped upon him. No. Luke had in truth got rid of that 'hall-mark,' so beloved of the English bourgeois; that 'hall-mark' which, complete with appropriate ties and blazers, warms the cockles of the hearts of our suburban snobs, and sends a charming thrill through the English colonies of cheap Italian watering-places. He had succeeded, to admiration, in erasing that 'stamp of a good public school,' which the sheep-mind likes to see impressed on the face of every Englishman whose circumstances are likely to make him a parson, a civil-servant, a soldier, or a Tory politician. Cambridge may have made Luke a scholar, but it had tied no label round his neck, and he had emerged from our educational system with an undinged personality, hard muscles and a formidable capacity to 'smash' — by fists, *épée*, or revolver — any one who crossed his wishes or 'gave any trouble.' Like most of those who live soft and sedentary lives, and have learnt to guard only that portion of themselves which is immune from physical attack, I find bruisers romantic. There was something enormously thrilling to me about Luke's beefiness. After we had spent some days together

in the rather close contact imposed by the loneliness of the house and the wildness of its surroundings, I discerned some of the chinks in his armour and located many of the weaknesses of character which accompanied his iron nerve and enviable physical prowess. But these discoveries, to which — in view of the humiliating discrepancy between us in regard to our respective 'smashing' capacities — I felt entitled, merely adjusted the balance a little and made things cosy. They certainly did nothing to detract from that new appreciation of my friend which I gained from seeing him on his own acres, in the tiny kingdom which — though he had bought the title to it with money — he had only actually conquered by the unstinted use of his own fists and his own muscles. At London parties and in London literary circles, Luke had often reminded me of a rather jaded bear munching a 'Zoo' bun. There was certainly nothing jaded about him now. He was at home. Classed as a *propriétaire-agriculteur* and endowed with a tiny ribbon for his button-hole — the order of *le mérite Agricole* which he had obtained by standing several drinks to the *maire* of his commune and taking one of the local deputies out to luncheon at Cannes — he had entrenched himself in a fatherland of his own deliberate selection. His neighbours respected him and liked him. To the people of the countryside he was *un brave type*. They admired his prowess as an airman, and his seven-year-old Ford, which he drove at enormous speed up and down the mountain roads, regardless of their steep gradients and hairpin bends, was an object of almost superstitious veneration throughout the Department. It was

bewitched, that Ford. It was constantly asserted that it could find its way home by itself. For how otherwise could Monsieur Luke drink his friends under the table, and then proceed — at two in the morning — to negotiate a break-neck track which most English drivers would be chary of attempting even at midday?

IV

It may be that Europe can boast a more beautiful stretch of country than that which lies between the Esterels and the Italian frontier, though I confess I find it difficult to believe it possible. The fact that this district has for years past been overrun by tourists of a type which arouses the justifiable detestation of all the decent elements in every civilized country, cannot detract from its loveliness. It remains, and always must remain, one of nature's masterpieces.

Perhaps not quite all that ingenious vulgarity can devise to disfigure the beauty of the coast-line has yet been done. The innumerable advertisements of Scotch whiskies, English Sunday newspapers and French *apéritifs*, which at present line the Corniche roads, may in due course be multiplied still further. In a few years these roads may be lined with one continuous hoarding and the brothels of Nice and Cannes may even begin to adopt this form of publicity, in competition with our whisky distillers. Who knows? The few kilometres in between the towns, which up to the present remain free of villas and hotels, will, doubtless, not enjoy many more years of immunity. But even so, even were the whole coast-line to become one con-

tinuous 'resort' for cosmopolitan profiteers to take their pleasures in, Nature still would defeat every effort of man to destroy the glory of her handiwork. And such ancient towns as Eze, La Turbie, Antibes, Biot, though they may be surrounded and hemmed in by the tide of opulent squalor flowing round them, are unlikely to be swept away by it. Their situations, for one thing, render them fairly safe. Also, though there may be nothing which the French business man will not do for money, and no vulgarity to which the municipal authorities of the Riviera towns will raise any objection, provided it pays, somewhere or other there is a French public opinion which is capable of becoming articulate.

In the summer months the French Riviera is seen at its best. The roads are not made impossible, as they are during the winter season, by an unending stream of ill-driven cars, and the climate — if reasonable precautions are observed — is perfection. The country miraculously recovers its self-respect as soon as the swarm of pleasure-seekers, on which it battens during the winter, has flown away to poison some other lovely coast. The experience of motoring with Luke between Cannes and Menton in the glorious July sunshine is one which I would not have missed for anything. Luke seemed to know nearly every one whom we encountered upon the road, and whenever we halted at a café the chances were that one of his innumerable acquaintances would be discovered there, contemplating an *apéritif*.

It was in a café at La Turbie, to which we repaired after visiting the ruined Roman tower with its two massive columns, which stands out so su-

perbly against the intense blue of the sky, that I first realized how little the Alpes Maritimes — the old Savoy — has really been assimilated into France. Luke, among his other activities, was a Fascist, and at La Turbie he discovered a brother Black Shirt, and the conversation became political. Personally, since — unlike Luke — I have resisted all temptations to belong to other nations, and remain an Englishman, Fascism, at least for England, does not appeal to me. I should hate to think that a time might come when, if I felt disposed to say 'To blazes with Baldwin' or 'To hell with Winston,' I should do so at the risk of being set upon by a crowd of shop-assistants and forced to swallow large quantities of castor oil. But Fascism in Italy is one thing, Fascism elsewhere another. In Italy there is a case for the Black Shirts, and my friend and his comrade very persuasively made it. For the Black Shirts are completing, perhaps have already completed, the task which the Red Shirts began. Garibaldi gave Italy one king; but it has been reserved for Mussolini to weld the country into one nation. Within a few months Italy, from being of little account in the councils of Europe, has risen to be a first-class Power, formidable in the present and showing every sign of becoming still more formidable in the future. If the Italian navy can only boast, as a recent sign of its prowess, the destruction in time of peace of a disarmed fortress used as a hospital for refugee children, the Italian army, when well led and well fed, is decidedly to be reckoned with — far more so than its allies in the late war perhaps realize. If Italy has been made a nation by the personality of Mussolini, at the head

of the well-organized Fascist 'machine,' it has to be remembered that it is a nation which is increasing with such rapidity that it will soon be forced to find some other overflow for its surplus population than the United States, under the 'quota' system, at present affords.

'We shall seize possession of Savoy, so infamously stolen from us in 1860 by Napoleon III,' said Luke's friend.

But Luke's English common-sense would not agree to this. 'You have Savoy already,' he observed. 'Nice to-day is almost entirely an Italian city. It is more Italian now than it was at the time of the annexation. And in the district round my farm there are numbers of Piedmontese labourers. It is the same throughout the Department. This part of France will fall to you in due course as a ripe pear falls from a tree.'

'But we must expand also in Africa,' said the Italian. 'We must take over Tunisia, Algeria. The French have no right to be there, raising a huge conscript army of black men to fight their European battles for them. Let them develop their own vast under-populated country. Any traveller who crosses the French frontier from Italy can see the situation for himself. In Italy every few kilometres there is a village. Wherever human energy can wring a living from the soil, the soil is cultivated, even high up in the mountains. But when you pass the frontier and descend into France, what do you see? Emptiness! The train runs on, kilometre after kilometre, but there is no village, no town, no station, hardly a sign of life. The French are a dying race, and France, like a decrepit miser, clutches

her money-bags, will yield nothing to her younger and more fruitful heirs, but strives only to increase her wealth at their expense. But Nature's laws must operate. It is a question of time.'

'You people at home,' Luke observed as we drove down into Menton, 'understand Italy as little as the French do. The French have been fussing about their Rhine frontier since the days of Louis XIV. Like their Bourbons they learn nothing and they forget nothing. But the Germans are not the only race whose women are fertile and whose men are energetic, who must expand or explode, and whose territories abut on France. As Giovanni observed just now, the Fascists, with Mussolini at their head, have welded Italy into a nation within the last two years. We shall see what we shall see. The English seem to imagine that Italy is a country merely of architectural exhibits, picture-galleries, health-resorts, and Roman antiquities, and that the sole occupation of the Italians is to run hotels and *pensions* for tourists. It is absurd. Italy, I grant you, is the cultural Holy Land for the whole civilized world. But the descendants of the men who made the Roman Empire, the descendants of the marvellous artists of the Renaissance, are by no means content merely to keep cheap lodging-houses among their ruins, for the benefit of foreigners. Races, like fields, benefit from lying fallow for a while. The Italians have had a long rest. Now they are awake again, and if you want to know what that is likely to mean in the future, travel through their country and use your eyes to see what it has meant in the past. . . .'

Luke, on this particular topic, was preaching to

the converted. Arrived at Monaco, we dined near the station, for an incredibly moderate sum, and toasted Italy in a bottle of her own *moscato.*

V

The idle life we led was like a pleasant sleep. Elisa brought us our coffee each morning at about eight o'clock, and after it we lay in our respective beds, reading the 'Petit Niçois' or the 'Éclaireur,' and smoking Eeg-Liff (High-Life) cigarettes until the awakening process was completed. At about nine, whichever was the more energetic would arise and call upon the other. Then, discarding our pyjamas for bathing drawers, we walked up to the round cement cistern which irrigated Luke's property. The cistern was about nine feet deep, when full, and about ten feet wide, and one climbed up a ladder to get into it. It made a perfect small swimming-bath, and that cool half-hour was one of the pleasantest events of the day. We used to look over the edge and watch Piètro pottering about among the vines and melons and the tuberoses, enjoying to the full the sensation of seeing another person work. Piètro was devoted to the farm. He knew every flower, every vegetable, every vine on the property and displayed them with an extraordinary degree of personal pride. Piètro was really an astonishing character, and the more I saw of him the more I appreciated him. He had not the dazzling good looks of Baptista, the boy at the neighbouring farm, who looked after Luke's historic Ford. Baptista was the typical Italian peasant encountered in the Department. He had dark, velvety eyes, soft and romantic, a bronzed skin, fine fea-

tures, and a slim, supple body. He usually wore a red flower behind his ear, wept if Luke spoke harshly to him, and drove Englishwomen crazy by his beauty. Piètro was of sterner stuff. During the war he had proved himself a notable fighter. He could use his fists, as well as the more usual knife and revolver, and probably had a neat method of kicking an adversary in the stomach and then biting his ear off. In his own way and in his own time he was an indefatigable worker with something almost amounting to a passion for the few hectares which constituted his master's kingdom. He was very honest over money matters, and very saving. Somewhere hidden under a stone, or buried in a safe place, he kept a considerable sum of money, and if ever Luke had omitted to go into his bank at Cannes he could always borrow a few hundred francs from Piètro. Once or twice a year Piètro scraped some of the accumulations of dirt from himself and appeared in splendid apparel — tight (and agonizingly uncomfortable) patent-leather boots, a horrible brown *complet*, a terrific pink shirt, and a collar and tie all in one piece. Dressed like this, he would proceed to the village fête where, with great deliberation, he would spend the day and night in getting drunk and fighting, arriving home unsteadily, with an eye out of commission or a tooth gone, and his clothes disordered! On the following day he would reappear, barefooted, in the shirt and frayed trousers in which he usually worked and slept. He was not without a 'private life,' a life so private that even Luke did not know all its details. Sometimes a small girl, aged about seven, would descend from the cottage above

Luke's property to speak to Elisa in the kitchen. Luke once asked her whose little girl she was, and she replied 'Piètro's.' The cottage was, in fact, Piètro's official base, and he was accustomed to refer to the elderly peasant woman who had been so kind to me on the day of my arrival, as 'my woman.' I think they must have quarrelled over me more severely than usual, because about a week after my arrival a solicitor from Cannes visited Piètro and listened to his tale of woe. He had sent for the *avoué* because he was tired of his woman and wanted a divorce from her. Luke and I listened while the lawyer made frantic efforts to make Piètro understand that since there had never been a marriage there could not possibly be a divorce. It did, at last, dawn on Piètro that there was no way of getting rid of his woman, no escape. So he shrugged his shoulders and continued to dig, resigned to the inevitable, while the lawyer, wiping the sweat from his forehead, fixed his leather satchel under his arm and made off. After this episode, Piètro and his woman appeared to settle down again together, in perfect amity. . . .

In remote districts, everywhere, one necessarily becomes intimate with one's neighbours and conversant with their affairs. Luke told me many strange life-histories and introduced me to many hard-bitten, hard-drinking characters, the lives of every one of whom, judged by English standards, would be considered disgraceful. One very charming old gentleman, greatly admired and respected, was nicknamed — quite in a friendly manner — 'the assassin,' because he had spent five years in prison for murdering his mistress. She had been an

extremely tiresome creature who had made, and had persisted in making, the most absurd financial demands upon him when he decided to discard her. The poor, tormented fellow, in a fit of justifiable annoyance, stopped the woman's clatter once and for all. Snatching his revolver, he rushed after her out of his house, and shot her through the heart. Unfortunately for the assassin he was too hard-up to bribe the judge who tried him, with the result that he received, instead of the usual acquittal, the terrific sentence of five years' imprisonment. No wonder that he was looked upon with sympathy and respect. He was a kind and courteous old man, though, emotionally, an extinct volcano.

We in England are accustomed to hold up our hands in horror at the supposed depravity of Latin peoples — particularly their sexual depravity; but I caught myself wondering, as I sat drinking in the village café, with Luke, the *garde-champêtre*, and two retired *sous-offs*, whether our national tendency to be shocked by our neighbour's behaviour isn't, in itself, the greatest depravity of all. This horror at the sinfulness, or the vulgarity, or the lack of gentility of other people, and the sense of superiority which accompanies it, is surely the besetting vice of our race! One cannot be long in Italy or France without finding it out.

'It's curious,' Luke observed, 'how living here among these people has enabled me to regard England and the English very much from the French angle. I simply couldn't exist now among ladies and gentlemen. My father, the colonel, and my mother are, I think you'll admit, pretty good specimens of their class and type. Since I was born

in it I am in the happy position of being able to express my detestation of it without being suspect. The attitudes to life of the aristocrat, the artist, and the artisan are the only ones I find congenial. Your complete English gentleman — the type in its purity is found only in England: the Celt hasn't got it, nor has any other race on the earth, thank God — is always idealized by people who for racial reasons can never quite be it. We always desire what we can't get, however worthless the thing may be in itself. To be a gentleman is only partly a question of blood; it is much more largely an attitude towards others and a moral code. Heaps of people called gentlefolk are grossly libelled: they are really, in the essentials of their mental make-up, aristocrats. Your *pukka* gentleman and lady have neither the sureness of the aristocrat on the one hand nor of the artisan on the other, nor are they detached, like the artist. As they are in a constant state of endeavour to reach some kind of social *terra-firma*, they are for ever trying to reassure themselves by contemning others.'

'Now look here, Luke,' I broke in, 'don't you start abusing our snobbery. Why, hang it all, it has made old England what she is, etc. It's our main incentive to endeavour! It's the source of modern England's greatness, man! The Empire rests upon it. In the eighteenth century, I admit, things were different. The gentleman then was an aristocrat; he belonged to the *noblesse* and had their point of view. The divisions between the classes were so clearly marked and so well understood, that social intercourse — in the country at all events — was pleasant and natural. Everybody "knew his

place," and tradesmen, farmers, and gentry met at one another's dinner-tables without the slightest discomfort. Snobbery and the great Anglo-Celtic-Jewish Empire were in embryo; twins waiting in the womb of Time!'

'I quite agree,' said Luke. 'The great change came in with the invention of steam power. The tremendous and sudden redistribution of wealth brought in your real gentleman, who *behaves* like a gentleman, of the present day. It's part of the obsession for bettering themselves which came over our fellow countrymen in the days of Queen Victoria and Samuel Smiles. I suppose nine tenths of the armorial bearing now in use are merely based on visits paid by successful business or professional men to heraldic stationers, in the forties and fifties. (You remember Thackeray's "Mr. Osborne"?) To become gentlefolk became the ideal of every middle-class family, and it was an ideal very easy of attainment. They had only to eschew retail trade as a means of gaining wealth, to send their sons to a public school and afterwards to Oxford or Cambridge, to make judicious marriages, and in less than a hundred years the miracle was accomplished. The son of the artisan becomes a clerk in a bank, and subsequently a manager; the son of the manager becomes a clerk in Holy Orders, a barrister, or — rapture for his suburban sisters — an officer in the army or navy. That is, and has been the process; and it is accompanied by such sneers and sniffs, such assertions that the Browns are common, and that the Smiths are "not quite quite," and so forth, that we mystified Continentals who go through life finding people agreeable or disagreeable

— and treating them accordingly — are lost in sheer amazement. Another thing,' continued Luke, after draining a glassful of his beloved red wine, 'which puzzles foreigners about our gentlemen and ladies is the curious code of ethics which the aspiring middle class in Queen Victoria's day contrived to associate with their conception of gentility. To the aristocratic habit of mind, in England as elsewhere, nothing could be more exquisitely funny. The aristocrat remains an aristocrat whether he is monk or debauchee, thief or honest man, whether he prefers to read the "Daily Herald" or the "Morning Post." He's the *free* man. He does, believes, and thinks as he damned well pleases. If he is the conventional Tory he is so because he likes it and feels that way. Your old soldier or landowner who clips his *g*'s, rides to hounds, thinks socialists ought to be shot down, and fires the footman if he won't vote Tory, is an eighteenth-century type. There's none of the Victorian gentleman business about *him*. *He* never consciously does the right thing, like the innumerable imitators of his type; and he doesn't need any definition. He just is.'

I thought of my acquaintance, Captain Charles, and agreed.

I knew exactly what Luke meant in his denunciation of the conventional 'lady and gentleman.' Examples of the sort of people of whom he was trying to give a description, with overbearing manners, and an invincible contempt for art, literature, music, scholarship, original thought, and 'foreigners,' may be encountered by scores in every Continental resort, in none more so than in Cannes.

They are recognizable by their acceptance of a ready-made 'morality' which enables them to be certain that they are always right, and that every one who differs from them openly, or is discovered in delinquency, deserves to be persecuted and insulted. As with all hypocrites, Charity is not their strong suit.

In France or in Italy a man who is punished for a crime or moral lapse is, as a rule, regarded as an unfortunate poor devil, and life is not made impossible for himself or his family after he has paid the penalty for his misdeeds. The Latin mind sees more clearly that the successful rogue, the arch wrong 'un, must be sought for among those who enjoy their ill-gotten gains undisturbed and are covered with honours and decorations. In matters of sexual morality, though in many ways Latin peoples are stricter than the Anglo-Saxons, their attitude seems much less unctuous and hypocritical. The deeper reason for this may be that in sunny climates the sexual appetite needs no artificial stimulation, whereas in our own too temperate island Nature's purposes can be met only by the aid of such devices to stir appetite as 'sin,' with its companion, the danger of disgrace. The Victorian era, when prudery was carried to its farthest limits, and 'sin' was as great an intoxicant as gin had been in the times of the first two Georges, was remarkable for sexual vigour and fertility. The modern reaction, with its freedom of discussion, its scientific attitude towards the procreative instinct, its energetic sanitation and sexual spring cleaning, seems, on the other hand, to be paving the way for race suicide. Perhaps, then, after all, there is much

to be said, from the patriotic standpoint, for the qualities which render a large section of our people objects of ridicule and of dislike to our European neighbours. If we cease to be snobs and cease to be hypocrites and prudes, we may for that reason lose our proud position among the nations of the earth! Are our vices, then, I wondered, merely the reverse of the medal; are they indivisible from our qualities? Who, indeed, shall answer! Again, if our national character changes and we sink from being the strongest nation in the world into the position of a second-rate power, are we likely, at the same time, to become in certain respects a more agreeable people?

I am afraid the dreams of the internationalists are a long way from realization. Still, the time may come when aggressive nationality — my flag waving over yours — shall become a thing of the past; when the 'greatness' of a people shall be measured by something less childish than armies and navies, colonies, exports, and exploitation; when nations shall become as near as possible self-supporting; when they shall be free to develop in peace the industries and arts in which they excel; when they shall be free to preserve untainted, for the benefit of the world at large, all that is noblest in their own traditions. Nations which oppress other nations are themselves in bondage.

Those who speculate on these lines, if they are Englishmen, must feel a queer melting of the heart at the thought of all the lovely things which the word England — for them — still connotes. 'England, my England,' is not the same as 'England, my British Isles,' or 'England, my British Empire.'

Somewhere, buried deep under the monstrous growth of our Imperial System, there is an England which is not Wales or Scotland or Ireland, but a separate entity in which a breath of individual life still flickers. Its heart still beats, however faintly. The Scotch and the Irish and the Welsh are extremely articulate about the beauties of their own countries and the virtues of their people — all honour to them for it. But for some reason which I have never been able to fathom, the majority of those who celebrate in prose and verse the essential charm of England seem to be men of partly foreign extraction. Mr. Wells, who, I fancy, is as English as they make them, is the great exception. Nothing is more delightful about his writings than their essentially English feeling: they have the indefinable quality which is traceable throughout English literature — the English note. Much as one may admire the work of Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton, their praise of Sussex and so forth is akin to Browning's appreciation of Italy: it is objective. However perfectly they and others use the English language as a vehicle for expression, the result has no intimately English flavour. . . .

'What on earth are you scribbling away there?' said Luke, 'using up all M. Graniolli's notepaper! We must take the old 'bus home, or Elisa will clear off without cooking our dinner. Finish your poisonous Picon, dear lad, and let us go!'

M. Grandmougins, late of the 'Legion,' and the superannuated bandit next to him both appeared to have a still unassuaged thirst which it was my turn to try to quench. So the *patron's* little daughter brought us another round of our respective poisons,

brown, red, and cloudy green, and after we had all clinked glasses and consumed our doses and shaken one another warmly by the hand, Luke and I went out into the twilit market-place, where his legendary Ford awaited us.

The village of Monjins, once impregnable and a sure refuge for lawless characters, is perched on the summit of a hill and commands a view in all directions, miles in extent. The lovely hush of evening was over the whole land as the car slid down the road. Far away we could see the bay of La Napoule and beyond it the sharp outline of the Estérels, against the pellucid sky. It was a sight to make one hold one's breath, so lovely was it. But though, in the flesh, I was still in the South of France, my spirit had in a queer way preceded me home, and had revisited the country town I knew in early childhood. I looked with unseeing eyes at the beautiful but alien countryside through which Luke's car was hurrying me. And all the while my thoughts were on a certain winding lane shut in by hedgerows; on a sluggish stream, arched over with branches, winding along at the end of a green meadow; on a red-brick farm with massive Tudor chimneys; and a green hill, with harebells growing on its summit; and a deserted chalk quarry where we used to pick the yellow toad-flax; on 'cold and frosty mornings'; and on the clatter of horse's hoofs in a stable-yard. . . .

VI

ARTHUR AND EDWARD

I

When I first encountered them, both Arthur and Edward had reached that vague twilight of the understanding which preceded the black obliteration that marked the final stage of one of their melancholy 'binges.' It was in the bar of a queer dancing châlet at Cannes, called 'Les Flots Verts,' and the hour, like the inmates, was decidedly advanced. Arthur was methodically finishing off anything in a glass that looked yellow, regardless of who the owner was. Edward, his monocle dangling to and fro in front of him, was bending over a small fox-terrier bitch and looking at her with eyes full of emotion and sorrow.

When Arthur had drained my untouched whisky-and-soda to the dregs, I asked him if he'd like another. He looked at me in rather a bewildered sort of way, stretched out a tremulous hand and said, 'Shake! That's Edward.' He nodded in Edward's direction. It really *was* rather sweet of him. I didn't in the least want to buy Edward a drink, too. I wasn't quite sure that I had the money to pay for it. But Arthur's loyalty to his similarly afflicted friend would have touched the stoniest heart. Edward was very, very tottery. He wasn't so much lost as gone before. Whither it was I could not discover, but it must have been a dim and Celtic sort of place, such as you read about in Mr. Yeats's

poems, a place of looming figures, shadowy, and somehow rather splendid. He came over to the bar, the little dog snapping affectionately at his ankles, and Arthur said, 'Our friend here is going to buy us a drink.' Edward slowly replaced the monocle in his left eye and looked dreamily through a group of bored, pathetic-looking *cocottes*, at the rippling sea whose little waves were dancing much more prettily than any one in the room. 'That's very nice of him,' Edward observed at last. 'Very nice of him indeed.'

'Ours is always a whisky,' Arthur explained confidentially. I believed him. Victor, the barman, who had been watching us with an amused smile upon his face as he stood behind his counter polishing the glasses, poured our drinks out with alacrity. . . .

Cannes, in July, is a place in which one is apt to meet strange and dilapidated characters of Anglo-Saxon origin. Poor toping men, broke in the bars — to misquote Kipling. Nearly all of them have pasts which they endeavour, with the aid of much alcohol, to forget. Edward, it struck me, must have had a more distinguished past than most. He had a charming speaking-voice, deep and melodious, and his general appearance had about it the remains of a bygone elegance. He was wearing an old but well-made grey flannel suit, and a grey hat with a very wide brim covered his attractively disordered mop of brown hair. His complexion was pallid, and his eyes, like cloudy green marbles, gave one no indication of the life that went on behind them. I should think he was not much more than forty, perhaps younger. 'Les Flots Verts,' he remarked, waving

his glass in the direction of the dancing saloon, where a few couples of jaded women were moving up and down the floor in the vain hope of attracting the attention of the half-dozen men who still lingered over their drinks. 'Rather bloody, don't you think?' A queer look of enjoyment came over his face. He beamed with pleasure. The complete, the absolute 'bloodiness' of Les Flots Verts appealed irresistibly to something deep in his nature which was beyond what we are accustomed to describe as a 'sense of humour.' It seemed to him strange and wonderful that the sea of life should have washed him up, helpless and unresisting, in such a perfectly dreadful den. The whole thing was an intimate joke which he shared with God. I felt that he must have a great many intimate jokes which he shared with God.

Arthur, who was propped up against the bar, his round and almost bald head gleaming under the electric light, and drops of moisture dripping from the despondent ends of his little brown moustache, watched his friend intently — with the passionate intentness of a mother gazing at her infant son. He was dressed in a white canvas shirt, duck trousers, leather belt, and sand-shoes, and appeared to be Edward's senior by about ten years. He was watching Edward because to-night it was Edward's turn to fade away. And Edward, though I had no means of knowing, was on the point of doing it. Mathilde, the little dog, who, as I afterwards discovered, was more than human in her intelligence, was also watching Edward. She whined, shifted her front paws uneasily, and from time to time bit his trousers to attract his attention and then looked up at

him to say, 'Come home, Edward,' with every ounce of feminine appeal that she possessed.

But Edward had passed far beyond the trivial affections of our mundane lives. He was in a world of his own, listening to the unearthly music of Mozart that came stealing across to him over a river of silver. He was in the formal garden of some eighteenth-century château. The trees were clumps of whispering blackness; the lawn, with the fountain in the midst of it, out of which rose the figure of a defiant girlish Venus, was silvery and mysterious under the stars and moon. A tiny orchestra, four fiddlers in powdered wigs, were playing in a miniature Greek temple far away, beyond the silver river, by the yellow light of flickering candles. The Magic Flute! And he was waiting.

Ah, there she was at last! Mathilde, Mathilde! He drew his cloak about him and lurked in the shadows, watching her advance across the lawn, with the moonlight on her powdered hair and gleaming bosom. She was wearing a blue silk frock, with panniers, and her footsteps were as light as leaves falling to the ground. Her little feet stole in and out . . . what was that? Her feet beneath her petticoat, like little mice . . . ? Mice! Mice! Mice! 'Jolly little things, mice,' said Edward slowly, when he returned for a moment to consciousness. Then a look of horror came into his eyes. 'Oh, my God!' he cried. 'Les Flots Verts!' Then he subsided, too tired to cope with life, into merciful forgetfulness. Arthur and I caught him in time to break his fall, and we lifted him and laid his inanimate form on a cane-bottomed settee, where, I gathered, it had rested many times before.

Victor leered sardonically and continued polishing glasses. 'It's all right,' he said. 'The little dog will see them home.'

'It's all right, old boy,' said Arthur. 'Don't you bother. See you in the morning.' Then he pointed a trembling hand at Edward, and gazed at me with the awful intensity of the drunkard. 'The finest man that ever lived. A man of letters, sir, and acquainted with grief.'

II

Arthur and Edward interested me enormously, and on the following day I asked Luke — whose acquaintance was extensive and peculiar — to tell me what he knew about them. Strangely enough, he did not know very much. To him they were just 'Arthur and Edward.' They always had been 'Arthur and Edward' ever since he had come to live near Cannes. They were unvarying in their habits. They visited five cafés in succession and had their hours for each, which never changed. Les Flots Verts was always their final port of call. Arthur in his youth had inherited a fashionable English chemist's shop in Cannes, and was supposed to have a wife and family living at Le Cannet. He had succumbed a long while ago to the enervating climate, had lost almost all his money, and now lived on doles sent him, presumably, by his wife. He hadn't any other interests in life except Edward and Mathilde, though occasionally — by way of taking exercise — he would play a game of cards. Edward was credited with an equally commonplace story. He had gone from Oxford into the army and during the war had seen two years'

service in Mespot before being invalided out. He was supposed to have published several books, though nobody had ever seen them. Four or five years ago he drifted to Cannes, and met Arthur. 'They can't last much longer, poor old things,' said Luke prophetically. 'Whisky, in this climate, makes you turn your toes up pretty quick.'

For some unknown reason, perhaps because I hadn't minded when I caught him pinching my drink, Arthur took rather a liking to me. Often when I encountered him he couldn't remember anything about me at all except just the one fact that I was on the right side of the fence and was not to be confused with the 'enemy.' The 'enemy' were those censorious individuals who betrayed a lack of respect for Edward. For himself he didn't much mind; after all, he wasn't anything to boast about. But Edward, a man of letters, the finest living man! Both of them had singularly charming manners; and no matter how far their daily intoxication had progressed, they always remained acutely sensitive to the manners of other people. Once Arthur had knocked a man down in Les Flots Verts for insulting one of the wretched women who ply their trade there.

The average day of Arthur and Edward was long and arduous. At about ten o'clock in the morning they would leave their respective rooms and totter shakily into the Taverne Royale for the first drink. In about an hour's time they were fairly normal, and — if it was a Saturday — were able to begin work. They worked only on Saturdays. Arthur's job was, I fancy, a fairly simple one. He merely sent the 'chass'' hurrying for writing materials

and scrawled: 'Dear Madge, can you make it 750 this week? I lost an awful lot at bridge last night. Yours, Arthur.' Or words to that effect. But Edward was, indeed, a man of letters. The letters had to be very good ones, and he had to use great discretion in regard to his choice of addressee. Uncle Lucius, for example, positively could not be written to more than four times a year. Aunt Mary never refused him. On the other hand, she never sent more than a fiver, and sometimes only a pound. I used to see Edward pondering the situation deeply, while Mathilde and Arthur gazed at him with mute sympathy. Once I was called in to help, and the three of us formed ourselves into a small working committee to consider methods of approaching Aunt Emily. 'You see, I really *am* writing another book,' said Edward pathetically. 'At least, I have the idea in my head. It isn't quite completely worked out yet, in all the details. When it is, of course I shall do the actual writing. So I think I might fairly tell Aunt Emily. . . . Don't you?' Mathilde was the first to reply. She woofed loudly, as much as to say, 'What are Aunt Emilys for, except to be told things?' Edward was descriptive about Aunt Emily. I could imagine her in her nice square early-Georgian house near Ham Common. It had a large garden, enclosed by a high wall of red brick — a garden with hollyhocks and herbaceous borders in it and masses of roses. I felt quite certain that the emotional thrill she would get from trying to do something for her scapegrace nephew — 'And, after all, my dear, you *must* remember that he fought for his country, and if it hadn't been for the awful heat in Mesopotamia I

am sure that dear Edward would *never* have exceeded' — was well worth an occasional expenditure of twenty pounds. So we laid it on a little thick, between us, and I persuaded Edward to send out for some note-paper and not to use the headed paper of the café, on which the words Taverne Royale might suggest to Aunt Emily the use to which her cheque was likely to be put. I had no moral scruples about aiding and abetting Edward, because I believe with all my heart that the only poor who ought to be helped by generous people are the undeserving poor. The deserving ones can usually help themselves; and, in any case, virtue is proverbially its own reward.

When they had spent a couple of hours in the dark and cool recesses of the Taverne Royale, Arthur and Edward, followed by Mathilde, went out for a moment or two into the blinding sunshine, dodged the trams with difficulty, and proceeded to a grimy bar down a side street, known as the 'Bar des Alliés.' This was really their home; the single bedrooms they inhabited in furnished lodging-houses, which oddly enough were not even very near to each other, were mere dormitories from which they escaped as soon as they could. When I inquired why they didn't sleep in the same house, I gathered from the reply that neither of them had the strength of character to face a move. (I understood that feeling only too well.)

The *patronne* of the Bar des Alliés had, I think, been Arthur's mistress for a time, before he married. That must have been over twenty years ago. She was a large, voluble, black-and-white sort of woman, with a maternal heart which retained a

soft spot for Arthur and had a still softer spot for Mathilde. Edward she regarded with awe, seeing in him a simple and holy man whom the Redeemer (Who had a notorious taste for what the world regards as bad company) would have taken at once under His wing. His affliction she regarded simply as an affliction, and she adopted an attitude neither of reproof nor of disgust towards it, but used her agile brains to reduce as much as possible the evil it did to Edward. Arthur, she could see, was still tolerably robust. At the Bar des Alliés the two friends, after having one or two to revive their energies after the effort of leaving the Taverne Royale, sat down to their *déjeuner* in the *patronne's* private sitting-room. I never shared one of these repasts, but I fancy that Madame must have been something of an artist to have got any food into them at all. There must have been sofas in that, no doubt, very dingy back room; and probably Edward kept his books there. He never read new books, but he used to refresh his memory of some of those which he had already tested. His tastes, as far as he revealed them to me, were varied. He liked Verlaine, 'Vanity Fair,' Vernon Lee, Virgil, and Voltaire — but this may possibly have been due to the fact that their names all began with a V, a letter of the alphabet to which he was enormously addicted. I think, as his brain grew cloudier and cloudier, he grew to confine his reading exclusively to 'Vanity Fair.' The book was like a thin cord connecting his frail barque of an existence, that tossed so uneasily on such a shadowy sea, with the dry land of normal life.

At six in the afternoon, when the worst of the

heat was over, Madame would bring the two friends tall tumblers of coffee, and chat to them while they rubbed the sleep out of their eyes. It was time for them to start once again upon their arduous and tragic pilgrimage. For the *apéritifs*, the Café Julien received them, by now a very morose, silent, and unhappy couple. Edward used often to say to me that the afternoon awakening was, if anything, the worse of the two. But when the first two or three drinks had been safely lowered to their destination, matters improved slightly. Somewhere about eight o'clock, Baptiste, their waiter, used to produce ham rolls for them, or bread and cheese. I think they never dined in the ordinary sense. When they had finished their snack it was time for them to go to Harry's, where Edward's day properly began. Harry's is one of those poisonous and uncomfortable bars which contrive, in some mysterious fashion, to collect a *clientèle* of unalterable fidelity. The prices were higher than they ought to have been, the drinks of inferior quality, the glasses badly washed, the chairs hard and uncomfortable. All the same, nothing that Harry could do could break his clients from their habit of visiting him. They came with invariable regularity, until, as often happened, they died.

It was at Harry's always that Edward began to think. His reason for drinking whisky was that it helped his mental processes and did not fuddle him, and he enjoyed his hours of thought more intensely than anything else in his existence. The entire day, indeed, was a slow and scientific building-up of the condition conducive to blissful thinking. Arthur, bless him, never dreamed of interfering with Ed-

ward during these ecstatic hours. If Edward liked to talk to him, so much the better. If he didn't, well and good. So Edward went on drinking and shared recondite jokes with his Creator, and developed the most ingenious theories, and beamed with happiness and amusement at the really frightful squalor amid which he found himself. Harry, the *patron*, in particular filled him with pleasure to contemplate. How the man loathed these English and the anglicized Frenchmen who drank with them, and put so much ill-gotten money into his pocket! Harry was pallid, unwholesome-looking, pock-marked, and lecherous, with the maniacal, untiring lechery of the Riviera. He despised and detested the devitalized drinkers whom he served. He had the hatred for abuse of alcohol which is common in wine-growing countries, and he loathed to see his fellow countrymen picking up these disgusting English habits. With the clairvoyance which always came to Edward in his, alas, all-too-restricted 'best moments,' he looked deep down into Harry's mind and laughed a Dionysian laugh.

Harry's ruling instinct made him turn his clients out by midnight, and at that hour Arthur and Edward, both very tottery, took their constitutional. The walk to Les Flots Verts was a good half-mile, but somehow they always managed to accomplish it. When, at two in the morning, they rose unsteadily from their chairs at Les Flots Verts, it was Mathilde who guided their staggering footsteps to their respective doors. Whichever of the two friends had faded out the more completely was accompanied to rest by Mathilde, who curled herself contentedly on the end of the bed as soon as she

heard the first snore. On occasions, particularly when remittances were overdue and the daily dose had been perforce curtailed, one of the friends would feel too ill the next morning to get up. If it was Arthur, and Mathilde happened to be with him, he would groan to her, 'Mathilde darling, go and fetch Edward.' And Mathilde, all alertness, willingness, and attention, would lift up her nose and give an understanding sniff. She would then scratch at the door until some one opened it, dart down the staircase into the street, and scamper off to Edward's house as hard as she could go. Edward knew at once what Mathilde's presence indicated. However decrepit he might be feeling, he would get into his clothes, obtain from some source or another the necessary bottle, and totter off with it under his arm, his monocle dangling in front of him, to Arthur's bedside. Never once did these two fail one another. They never quarrelled; they shared all they possessed or could obtain; and if reduced to starvation rations of alcohol, they divided their resources as scrupulously as the survivors of a wreck, at sea in an open boat, would divide their few remaining drops of water. Always, as on the evening when I first encountered them, if one was offered a drink, he immediately introduced the other, so that he might not be alone in his good fortune.

Dear Arthur, dear Edward! The world is a harsh place for the completely helpless; but perhaps, who knows? when you come up for judgment your good qualities will be remembered unto you and your joint affliction passed over rather more lightly than respectable people might consider fitting!

VII

SELECT PENSION

I

It was in a small town containing many large hotels, a town which stands amid orange and lemon groves, olives and the ubiquitous interloping palm, on the shores of the Mediterranean, that I discovered the 'Select Pension,' but nothing would induce me to give a more precise indication of its whereabouts. Its charm is too subtle and delicate to be subjected even to the feeble glare of publicity which a direct reference in these pages to its geographical situation might turn upon it.

My arrival at the *pension* was due entirely to chance, and is one of the few instances I can remember of the Fates actually doing me a good turn. All the hotels in the town were too expensive for me, so I inquired of a clerk at the bank the names and addresses of some *pensions*. He gave me several names and I drove, through pouring rain, to the first of them. The house was shut up. The second one was a flat, at the very top of a dim, dark palace, and when I arrived, panting for breath, I was shown into a living-room full of priests and nuns having tea with the proprietress. I excused myself, retired hastily to the cab, and set off for the third address, which was on the outskirts of the town. When we had got halfway to it — by this time I was feeling the awful dejection which sweeps over the traveller who drives about a strange place unable to find a

roof to shelter him — I happened to see a notice-board attached to a wall, at the corner of a narrow lane. On this I read: 'Select Pension. On parle française. English spoke. Open all year.' I stopped the cabby and made him drive up the lane. On either side of it were several new villas, plain, square buildings with red-tiled roofs and whitewashed walls, and a few, not yet completed, which had the queer ruinous look which unfinished Italian houses always seem to assume. We came at last to the 'Select Pension,' a villa to which a one-storyed *annexe* had been added, at right angles. It lay back some way from the road, the intervening space being cultivated as a kitchen garden to supply the needs of the house. I ran hurriedly along the path, jumping the puddles as well as I could, and rang the bell. The door was opened to me by a short but well-made and wiry-looking young man whose age could not have been more than twenty-three. His small clever green eyes glittered at me and he showed any number of even white teeth, in a most engaging smile. His brown hair retreated from his forehead in a series of most seductive waves, and he wore a smartly cut check suit and patent-leather shoes. The room into which I was shown was a large and rather bare dining-room, fresh-looking and spotlessly clean. At one corner a tall youth stood attending to a gramophone, while a young girl in a bright green woollen jumper sat on a table near by it, swinging her legs.

I explained what I wanted, in English, to the young man with the green eyes, and he obligingly took me across to the villa and showed me a first-floor room with a balcony which was just large

enough for my purposes. We quickly came to terms, and Felice — which I afterwards discovered was his name — hurried away to bring in my suitcases, while I sank into a deck-chair and smoked a cigarette, full of contentment and relief.

II

From the moment when I first crossed its threshold I knew instinctively that I was going to be happy in the select *pension*. Its atmosphere was friendly and home-like, and perhaps I received a special welcome because I was the only guest. Comfort in an hotel or *pension*, for persons of a certain temperament, depends much less on *confort moderne* and *installation de premier ordre*, running water in every room and so forth, than on the character and disposition of the people who conduct it. The Reggolo family had not yet been installed in their *pension* for a sufficiently long time to have grown hardened and professional, and the arrival of a guest was still rather an exciting moment. They were expecting a large crowd in July and August; but this was June, and I had them to myself.

The *pension* was the joint venture of four brothers, the *fratelli* Reggolo. As bar-tenders and waiters in London restaurants they had amassed between them, in two or three years, enough money to buy the house and about an acre of land. Two of the brothers, Giovanni and Giuseppe, were away from home. Giovanni was a head waiter at Vittel, and Giuseppe was a waiter at some other fashionable spa. Rocco, who stammered and had seductive brown eyes and far more than his fair share of per-

sonal charm, went off soon after I came, to join Giuseppe, leaving the remaining brother Felice — my green-eyed friend, with the Marcel-waved hair — in charge of the establishment. The two girls of the family, Pina and Cesira — both of whom were very much 'kept in their places' by Felice — did most of the work of the house, helped by the aged parents, who lurked at the back, behind the kitchen. The parents were simple, illiterate peasants whose children had soared far above them in the social scale. 'They keepa themselves always in the backa,' said Felice, with his disarming smile. I insisted one day on going round to 'the backa' and making the acquaintance of his father and mother. The white-haired signora, who had a face of singular sweetness, received me with the most charming courtesy. Her husband, though equally courtly, seemed rather a morose individual. He had grey hair, a complexion of dark mahogany, and a small grey moustache, and he held himself very erect. It was one of his jobs to go into the town every morning on Cesira's bicycle to get the bread for the day, and I used to meet him coming back when I was starting off to bathe. His face wore an expression of settled gloom for six days of the week, though he was slightly more cheerful on Sundays. 'I wisha I had a lira for every litre of wine that old man has drunk,' Felice once observed to me. 'I don't let him have the key of the wine-cellar now. But on Sundays I let him go and play bowls, and then 'e drinka as much as 'e like.' That perhaps explained the Sabbath cheerfulness. Soon after my arrival a dreadful family dispute arose, in which, as an adopted member of the household, I had to take

part. Felice wanted to make his father wear a peaked cap with 'Select Pension' printed upon its black ribbon in letters of gold. He designed that the old man should act as *facchino* in his odd moments and go to the railway station to meet the trains. We discussed the whole question at great length, and eventually Felice was outvoted by his sisters and myself. In his dreams of future greatness — the 'Select Pension,' in a year or two, was to be transformed into an hotel, with a hall-porter in gold braid, lifts, a terrace, and a jazz band — there seemed no suitable place for his aged sire. The old man was just a waste product. Felice hated waste of any kind — the mere thought of it made him wretched — and if only Signor Reggolo had consented to wear the peaked cap of servitude a grievous weight would have been lifted from his mind.

III

Cesira, Felice, and I — Pina stayed at home because she was wall-eyed and bashful — used to go out nearly every evening to watch the dancing in the big ballroom of the Hôtel Grande Italia. Felice's conversation on these occasions used to fill me with wonder, for I had not yet become accustomed to the mania of the Italians for personal gossip and their preoccupation with sex. His sharp green eyes missed nothing. Did a couple, in the excitement of the tango, exchange but for an instant an amorous glance, sure enough Felice noted it and commented upon it with an amused chuckle. He knew all about the relations which existed between the middle-aged Englishwoman and the Italian boy with whom she was dancing; and precisely how many lire she

had given him to buy clothes with. And he knew that the dancing professional, an absurd creature with a mop of black hair and a face as solemn as a sheep, who wore dancing-pumps with crimson heels, was getting tired of his Russian mistress and was making eyes at another girl. He pointed the new girl out to me, one night. 'Looka, Meestaire, that one in the red frock sitting at the table opposite, with the bald-headed man.' I duly looked. In a week or two I became almost as well posted in the amorous news of the little town as Felice was himself.

Oddly enough, the only person about the secrets of whose heart Felice was not fully informed was his own sister. Alas, poor Cesira, with her bright black eyes and charming smile, her mask of gaiety, her energy, her goodness! She, like so many other unfortunate Italian girls, knew all the bitterness of thwarted passion. At the age of fifteen and a half, before the family migrated from the plains of Lombardy to the coast, her brothers had arranged a betrothal for her with a young man who sold salt, tobacco, and firearms in a small and stagnant town called Villafranca. He was such a promising young man, so eminently suitable! But twenty looks at the world with different eyes from fifteen, and though the particular resort in which the *pension* was situated was nothing for most of us to write home about, for Cesira the contrast between it and the place in which she was doomed to pass her life — a town in which there was not even a cinema — was agonizing. Besides, there was Agosto! Agosto was a *farmacista* with the tenderest, the warmest brown eyes, the most entrancing smile. All day he

stood behind the counter in his black overalls, selling pills and powder; but after nine he would take his evening stroll along the sea-front, and there were times when he would hover outside the entrance to the Grande Italia. If Cesira was there they would exchange glances of fervent and despairing passion whenever Felice's back was turned. Cesira would go to bed on those evenings happy and yet, at the same time, exquisitely sad. For though Signor Grasso, her *fidanzato*, was doubtless handsome and had a shop of his own, and though Agosto was only an assistant, and not very good-looking, in most people's eyes, still — he was Agosto.

I could always tell when Cesira had set eyes on her adored one, for on the morning after the encounter she would burst into piercing song while she was sweeping out the dining-room. 'Nostalgia' and 'Gigolette' were her favourite tunes, but — if she saw me on my balcony — she would, for my benefit, begin at once on 'Yiss, we-*arve*-no . . . banannias, we-*arve*-no . . . banannias . . . to-dee.'

Cesira's English was more limited even than my Italian, and our effort to teach each other our respective languages was not a great success. Her name for me was 'Meestaire,' to which she occasionally added 'Dooglas.' (My surname, I find, both in Spain and Italy, is invariably dropped by the tacit consent of all parties; it is a noise which the Latin tongue is apparently unable to make.) Whenever she wanted me to come down for a meal, she would come under my window and shout, 'Meestaire! *Pronto!*' following it with shouts of laughter. The food at the 'Select Pension' was not all it might be, but Cesira's cheery '*Bon appetito!*'

and her perpetual high spirits enabled one to swallow most of it with relish. I never could manage, however, the enormous dishes of *pasta asciutta* with which the midday meal invariably began, chiefly because Italians will hardly ever cook their macaroni sufficiently to enable it to be digested by English stomachs. On the day of my arrival I asked Felice to give me a hors d'œuvre instead. 'Certainly, Meestaire,' he replied. 'I make-a you always a nice-a antipast. Nice-a sardine! Nice-a tomato!' His intentions were admirable, but the depressed and unshaven *cuoco*, who performed over a little charcoal brazier at the back of the house, invariably forgot his orders. Sometimes my 'nice-a antipast' would be brought in, as an afterthought, at the very end of luncheon: it never arrived in time for me to eat it.

From the gastronomical point of view the best thing about the food was the cheese — *grivvera*, *formagetta*, *bel paese*, or *gorgonzola*. Those who have not yet tasted *grivvera* — it is quite different from real Gruyère — have a pleasant experience in store for them. I do not know where it is made, and I never encountered it at any 'good' restaurant or hotel. Perhaps it is a cheese only eaten by peasants and the poorer sort of people: I do not know. But Felice was addicted to it, and I have found it also in several Ligurian mountain villages.

After meals Cesira, at my request, would turn on the *gramofono*, while Felice and I piled up the tables and cleared a space for dancing. I am afraid she did not find me a very apt pupil, though I did my best to forget the kind of dancing to which I am accustomed and to imitate the sort of thing she liked.

When the *pension* began to fill up, I found another partner, a charming and accomplished Hungarian woman, who indulged me in my English habits. By the middle of July there were about twenty guests in the house. They represented five different nationalities, though all of them, except an aged Scotch lady and myself, came from Milan. The Scotch lady was stone deaf but very talkative. She spoke Italian in a deep bass voice and with a strong Glasgow accent, and it was her habit, after delivering herself of her political views, opinions on the weather and so forth, to push across to her victim a pencil and writing-pad. When some appropriate comment had been inscribed upon her tablets, she would start off again. Her French, which (for patriotic reasons) she reserved exclusively for use upon a German family who shared her table, was as devastatingly Glaswegian as her Italian. She could not possibly have been less than seventy, and though vigorous enough, she was decidedly tottery. All the same, her age and infirmity did not prevent Felice and Cesira from crediting her with a romantic *amour*. She was devoted to chess, and her principal crony was a very old Italian doctor who came in to see her nearly every afternoon and remained closeted with her over the chess-board, sometimes for four or five hours at a stretch. Felice on these occasions used to come to me with a delighted, significant grin and say, ''E 'as been there four hours!' When I remonstrated with him, he only observed sagely that 'every age has its particular pleasures.' To the Italian mind I really believe that the presence of two unrelated persons of opposite sex alone together in a room is susceptible

only of one interpretation. Cesira was no less delighted than her brother by these venerable lovers.

Ah, this love! After a while the atmosphere of the *pension* became positively oppressive with thoughts of love. Cesira's mental outlook sometimes reminded me of a wall-paper I once encountered in the bedroom of a dubious French hotel, a wall-paper whose pattern consisted of cupids endlessly embracing one another amid garlands of pink roses. No love-story ever written could be too sickly for Cesira's taste. Secure in her own well-guarded virtue — a virtue reënforced by Holy Church (for she was very devout), by her abject fear of her brothers and of her *fidanzato*, and by her *petit-bourgeois* respectability — she beamed rapturously through the bars of her cage at the 'goings-on' of the lucky sinners around her. That all men were in almost daily need of amorous dalliance she took for granted, and perhaps as far as her own countrymen are concerned she was right. The question she asked herself in regard to males was not, 'Is he in love with some one?' but, 'With whom is he having an *affaire*?' I once invited a blameless English married couple who lived in Genoa to dine with me at the *pension*, and I saw at once from Cesira's heightened colour as she waited upon us, from the light in her eye and the benevolent glances which she from time to time cast upon me, the conclusions to which she had come. Invisible garlands of pink roses were thrown around me and the unsuspecting Mrs. Smith, invisible horns were made to sprout from the candid brow of the excellent Smith. As the dinner advanced, Cesira's excitement grew more hectic. I ordered a bottle of *passito*, to drink

instead of port. She flew as upon wings to get it for me. *Passito!* At once she had a vision of poor Smith weltering in his gore, and of Mrs. Smith and myself enjoying a night of passion.

I saw my friends off by the ten-thirty train and returned to find Cesira slightly bewildered, but still obstinately romantic. The signora was *bellissima*, she had *molto* 'kick' (*chic*), etc., and the more I protested that the signora was merely a friend, the more roguishly Cesira laughed at me. I had to leave her to her delusions. Had I thought that she would credit me with fidelity to the Signora Smith, I should have been sadly disappointed. The next night, having nothing better to do, I took the Hungarian lady, the 'Ongaressa,' to a café where we sat under the stars, talked politics, and drank a *caffè espresso* and a *biccherino* of Strega. We strolled home together soon after eleven and retired to our respective rooms. The *pension* was dark on our return. Felice had not yet come home and Cesira had gone to bed. We did not see any one, and we were quite unconscious of the fact that we had done anything of the slightest interest or worthy of any kind of comment. But the next morning when, in answer to Cesira's piercing 'Meestaire!' I went downstairs to drink my coffee, I saw at once that something, as the saying is, was up. I had begun by this time to dread Cesira's knowing smiles. This morning she seemed deliriously happy. She cooed at me like a ring-dove. She asked me tenderly how I felt, and begged me to have two boiled eggs with my roll, to keep up my strength. The Signorina Irène, she added, had just waked up. 'La Signorina è molto allegra questa matina!' she observed, slyly.

'Cesira, you little devil!' I cried. 'If you don't dry up, I shall seize you and spank you!' But as she understood not a word, my threat was of no avail.

When the house became full to overflowing with visitors, the original 'family party' atmosphere could not very well be preserved, but Cesira and Felice never relaxed their kindly interest in the first arrival, and frequently showed me small attentions which were calculated to make me feel that they regarded me as a friend. I left their house with real regret, and was touched almost to tears when on the morning of my departure Felice presented me with a ridiculously small bill, without one single overcharge! What this meant, all who are familiar with the Italian character will understand at once. Signor Reggolo fetched me my cab — the best in the town — and after I had made my adieux to the family, Felice, with folded arms, took his seat by my side and we drove off amid much waving of hands and hats, cries of 'Meestaire' from Cesira and 'Chow, inglese!' from my Hungarian friend. Felice got me my ticket, drank a Strega with me, and saw me into the familiar train. The memory of his warm handshake and his charming smile gave me a feeling of physical comfort — a pleasant glow, such as one gets from drinking a glass of good port wine. And as the train bore me farther and farther away from the little town about the *amours* of whose inhabitants, thanks to Felice, I was so fully informed, a hundred pleasant memories came into my head. When I got back home again, I found my thoughts frequently turning to the 'Select Pension.' In imagination I could hear Cesira's piercing so-

prano, her rippling laughter and her gay morning greeting: 'Meestaire! *Pronto!*' I thought of the sunshine and the blue sky; of the nights, all diamonds and black velvet; of the fireflies, and the oranges and lemons, the terraced vines, the olive groves; and of the strange peace which comes from living among simple folk. And I could well understand why it is that, in remote fishing villages on the shores of the Mediterranean, you so often come across an odd Englishman who, you are told, came to the place years ago for a week, and has never left it. It is possible, even for Londoners, to be sometimes homesick for the South.

MONTENEGRIN MEMORIES

MONTENEGRIN MEMORIES

I

CETTINJE

I

It was in the autumn of 1912 that, in company with a friend in the army who had wangled a few weeks' leave, I first set eyes on the Dalmatian coast, and it was without premeditation, acting on a sudden impulse, that at Gravosa I decided to follow Basil (who had gone on to Cattaro) and spend the last few days of my holiday in a visit to Montenegro.

The boat — it was the Baron Gautch, at that time the finest of the Lloyd steamers — left Gravosa at eight on a lovely October morning and with regret I said good-bye to the long narrow bay, closed in by wooded hills dotted with lovely villas and *palazzi*. We swung clear of the quay, passed the black S. Y. Vectis, which had anchored the day before, rounded Punta Lapad, and steering south through the Bocca Grande, steamed along the wooded coast till Ragusa, jutting out into the sea, surrounded and half-hidden by its walls and towers, burst upon us in all its mediæval splendour. After leaving the island of Lacroma on our left, we passed the bay of Breno and the rock-islands of Bobara and Merkan and came abreast of the dilapidated but once famous town of Ragusa Vecchia. The coast after this became arid, monotonous, rocky, till at last, rounding the sharp Punta d'Ostro, we sailed by the forts on the rock of Rondoni and on

the Punta d'Arza into the entrance of the celebrated Bocche de Cattaro.

The excitement on board now became intense. Every one got out his guide-book and his spy-glasses, and took up the best position available and spoke in whispers. I was told over and over again, in guttural English or in German-French, that there wasn't anything like it in the world. My heart sank lower and lower, expecially when I discovered that Baekeder likened it to Lake Lucerne. Scenic splendours of an obvious kind have always left me a little cold, ever since a disastrous journey in my youth to that very lake. Then I duly ascended the Righi and Mount Pilatus, and went to Goshenen and Andermatt. I have pictured the kind of mountains that are raved about, since that time, as visited by schoolmasters and 'really keen men' (in the undergraduate sense) and peopled by jodelling milkmen with a tendency to goitre. And I date from that holiday my preference for the little private English mountains on whose bosoms I can hide myself and be alone — hills that I can climb comfortably in an afternoon, unencumbered by ugly boots and a stick with a spike in it.

Long before we got to Castelnuovo, the first lovely port in the Bocche, all these prejudices had been swept away. There was something barbaric and untamable about the aspect of the great fjord which contrasted delightfully with the traces, on every side, of a most ancient civilization and culture. I had read very little about the history of the district, but almost at once I had an intuition that great things had happened here.

The Bocche consist of three large harbours joined

to one another by narrow canals, and walled in on almost every side by high and sinister mountains. Castelnuovo was an attractive spot. The town nestled in a mass of greenery under the shadow of Fort Spagnuolo, while farther back rose a cloud-draped hilltop. From the steamer one could see its ancient ivy-clad walls, contrasting oddly with its brand-new Hôtel Boka. The situation of Castelnuovo was said to be the most agreeable for residence of any of the towns of the Bocche, while the place had some importance, even in 1912, as the terminus of a railway leading to Gravosa, and thence inland to Sarajevo and Buda-Pesth. The little *molo* was too small for the big steamer to be moored against it, so she anchored in the bay and the passengers were landed in boats.

After Castelnuovo the grandeur of the scenery increased. We passed through the narrow Canale di Kumbur and entered the great triangular-shaped Baja di Teodo, largest of the three harbours, where a whole navy could lie concealed. The shores of the bay were green and thickly wooded and dotted with pretty houses. Many of the officers in the Austrian Navy were said to come and live on the Bocche when they retired, and the Bocchese have for centuries been celebrated seafaring men.

Sailing straight across the baja, we came to the narrowest canal, less than half a mile across, called Le Catene, because it used to be protected by a chain boom. And once through this channel, we found ourselves in the innermost and most magnificent of the three loughs. Straight in front of us under the towering height of Monte Casson, and looking as though it had barely enough room to

stand on, was the once important city of Perasto, with its decrepit campanile. It stands on a spit of land separating the Bay of Risano on the left from the Golfo di Cattaro on the right, and was then little more than a village, full of decayed, half-ruinous villas. What it was that had caused this distress I couldn't discover. The town of Risano, they told me, had sunk in population from four thousand in 1850 to thirteen hundred, and Perasto had suffered even more. Apparently there used to be a considerable shipbuilding industry at one time at these two places, which has now disappeared. I longed to explore Perasto, but never got the chance. One of the officers of the ship pointed out to me the two little islands in front of it of San Giorgio and La Madonna. On the latter was a church containing, he said, a very holy picture, painted by Saint Luke. It was brought to Perasto in the fifteenth century, but moved of its own accord, surrounded by lighted candles, to this island of La Madonna. When it had done this three times it was allowed to remain. The great festival of the Madonna della Scalpello, as it is called, is on the 12th of July. There used, also, to be another public holiday on the day of the Assumption, August 15th, when a national ball was held, celebrated for the variety and gorgeousness of the costumes. My informant didn't seem to know if these festivals were still kept alive in the beautiful, deserted town. From Risano to Perasto, and on through the straggling village of Dobrota to Cattaro, a road runs along the eastern shore which must be one of the loveliest in Europe.

With each turn of the screw the scene now became more and more awful and silencing. The great

limestone mountains towered up into the clouds all along the eastern side, exquisite in colouring — grey, dark blue, mauve. At their feet, balancing on a narrow strip of land between the crags and the shore, were white villas bowered in trees, while every now and then villages reflected themselves in the still, dark-blue waters. The extreme fertility of the outer shores of the Bocche lessens as one proceeds inland and its appearance becomes more and more that of a fjord. At the very end, at Cattaro, the wall of mountains is so high that sunset falls there hours earlier than anywhere else on the Adriatic, and in winter it grows dark soon after two o'clock.

I had gone on to the lower deck right up in the bows, during the latter part of the journey, to get a better view, and stayed there until we were alongside the *molo*. The broad quay was crowded with people to watch our arrival, and the whole scene was delicious. In front was the little Venetian city, dominated by its series of fortifications running up the side of a rocky hill and connected with one another by stone walls; and higher, at the back, rose the huge, frowning mountains, which culminated in the peak of Lovcen, which is the legendary *monte negro*.

Cattaro looked very gay in the midday sun, jutting out on its little tongue of fertile land into the transparent, still water. In the crowd that met us were girls, dressed fashionably in the modes of Paris or Vienna, smart-looking officers, Montenegrins, vain as peacocks in their elaborate and costly national dress, and hordes of unshorn, unwashed, villainous-looking facchini. The lovely gardens just

by the quay-side looked delightful, the promenade outside the town walls — the Marina — against which rows of *feluccas* and *trabaccoli* were moored, a delicious place for idling. I knew Basil would not have moved very far from here, and that I should infallibly discover him in a café, drinking his *apéritif*.

II

Basil, of course, was sitting outside the café which faces the Porta Marina, by which you must enter the *piazza* from the quay. His handsome, bronzed face and dark, military moustache were creating their usual effect, while the Austrian officers were eyeing his perfectly cut breeches with ill-concealed envy. He looked half-asleep, had an unfinished drink in front of him and, of course, it hadn't occurred to him to *go* anywhere. He watched my harassing struggle with the porters with immense appreciation, and without offering to help!

They were terrible fellows, these porters. Nearly all spoke a little broken English. One of them, Mato Golub by name, held out to me an elegantly printed visiting-card bearing his name and the statement that he was 'guideman, speaking english-franch.' I told him I didn't speak 'english-franch,' and didn't want a guideman, at which he smiled pityingly and produced a picture-postcard of Saint Paul's Cathedral. We parted without *complimenti*. It was nearly an hour before my heavy suitcase was deposited in the Agenzia of the Lloyd Company and I was able to rejoin the languid Basil.

'I'm off to Cettinje to-morrow,' I told him, and,

as I expected, he decided instantly to come too. Before we lunched we strolled round the little town, losing ourselves in tortuous streets, mere alleys between rows of tall stone *palazzi*. We went into the dark Duomo of Saint Trifonius — Saint Trifon is patron of the city and his festival is on February 3d — and saw some beautiful carving in hidden corners. Cattaro was a curious town, combining an advanced civilization with an intense discomfort. It had about five thousand people and a large garrison; pleasure of a dull and dissipated kind was freely indulged in; the streets were very rowdy at night and the cafés stayed open late: and yet, at the same time, you could not in those days get even tolerable accommodation. The hotels were all 'unpretentious' in the extreme, and it was impossible, apparently, to obtain anywhere in the town a reasonably well-cooked meal.

Basil and I made our preparations for departure without regret, and our preparations were characteristic of us. We had that intense dislike of each other's peculiarities which is one of the great charms of friendship. I saw him watch with disgust as I filled a little envelope with bath salts and bought a special packet of cigarettes for the brigands. (I had long ago decided how I should deal with brigands. I should halt, take off my hat, bow, and advance with my cigarettes in one hand and a box of matches in the other. I refuse to believe that there is a brigand in existence who could withstand it.) Basil, unmindful of my laughter, talked a great deal about 'sticking to one's kit as long as possible, don't you know,' and bought quantities of lozenges for his pop-gun. He was so superbly attired for 'walking

in mountainous countries' that I began to feel rather ashamed of my conventional grey-flannel trousers.

We started off in good style by his method, for which war maps and a compass were necessary. It did splendidly at first, until he discovered that something had gone radically wrong with the compass. We had wearily to retrace our steps to Cattaro and after this experience Basil was all for trying to get a seat in the autobus which pants up the great highroad. I pointed out to him that one had to wire for a seat two days in advance, and we then succumbed to a less ambitious, 'psychological' method of pathfinding, and studied the ground in search of the beaten track. It was really very easy to discover. There has probably for centuries been a constant coming and going of the Montenegrins between Cettinje and Cattaro. Their market is situated just outside the northern gate, the Porta Fiumara, and from here the track — the celebrated Scala di Montenegro — rises in zigzags up the precipitous side of the mountain, following the Fiumara Ravine. It begins by the side of the clear, swift Fiumara, which seems to rise full-grown out of nowhere, and the path is quite a good *vieux chemin* of the Provençal type, piled over sometimes with stones, but zigzagging gently enough to make it possible for a laden mule, though hardly for a ridden pony. Up till 1881, I was told, it was the only road in existence to Cettinje. The unencumbered walkers, of course, seldom follow the zigzag, but go almost in a bee-line up the face of the mountain. We were lucky enough to overtake a Montenegrin family who were doing this, and tacked on

to them to our great advantage. The grizzled, not over-clean, father headed the procession and picked out the path. He wore the native dress underneath a faded jacket, obviously the product of the local 'American tailor,' and carried a bulging umbrella under his arm. The umbrella was rather a shock, as I expected him to have a yataghan at least, and a whole collection of carving-knives in his waist-band. I discovered afterwards that though many Montenegrins dispense as much as possible with their weapons, none is ever seen in public without his umbrella. The man was followed at a respectful distance by his wife, who suffered in order to be beautiful, for I noticed that she endured the agony of wearing cheap black boots instead of the native *opanken* — part sandal, part moccasin — which are especially adapted to climbing over rocks. After her came two daughters, girls of about twenty, also with firmly grasped umbrellas, who wore on their heads the little round caps of the unmarried. The family looked up at us as we approached, and we smiled at one another amiably. 'Njegus?' I said, looking a question-mark. 'Njegus,' replied the father, nodding his head and pointing. (Njegus is the halfway village between Cattaro and Cettinje.) Then followed another remark to me in Slav from the man, at which I shook my head, and said, 'Inglès.' 'Ah! Inglès!' More smiles.

When we had got halfway up the mountain-side, following the course of the torrent, we came to a grove of young trees and a lovely waterfall, at the head of which was a tiny stone mill and a bridge. There was a little laden mountain pony outside the stone hut, and within a fire of sticks was burning in

the middle of the floor. We crossed the stream by the bridge and sat and rested on a sun-warmed ledge or rock — evidently a recognized halting-place. Here the Montenegrin family accepted some of the wine we had brought and found it frankly horrid (which it was), while we ate some of their delicious bread and cheese. The sun poured down on us as we munched in silence, looking at the unsurpassed panorama which stretched before us. Immediately at our feet lay Cattaro, a tiny town huddling between the cliff and the shore, and then, opening bay after bay — a series of calm blue shining lakes shut in by crags rising precipitously out of the water — the marvellous Bocche. In the far distance a line of glittering silver revealed the Adriatic.

Another hour's climb brought us on to the high-road, whence the walk into Njegus was easy going. Leaning over the parapet of the road, where the bridle track joined it, was a row of armed Montenegrins smoking cigarettes — a frontier guard perhaps. I sat down on the stone to rest for a moment or two. It was very cold, but the air was extraordinarily clear, invigorating, and *exciting*. One could walk for ever! All round were great bare mountains wreathed in mist. An old woman passed us as we sat, bent double beneath her entire household goods — pots, pans, clothes, and a gigantic lock and key of peculiar pattern — with which she was hurrying into Cattaro. Another passed going in the opposite direction, with a load of faggots on her back and a fowl under each arm. The Montenegrin soldiers put their faces down, kissed the fowls, stroked their heads, and patted them with charming good-humour.

It was too cold to wait long, so Basil and I hastened along the highway till we came into the broad basin among the hills, in which lies Njegus under the shadow of Mount Lovcen. The sides of some of the hills, particularly of Lovcen, were covered with lovely trees whose leaves were now a rich golden brown. Others were indescribably desolate and bare.

Njegus was a village in two detachments, the first a circle of stone huts round a broad village green, at the entrance to which was a new but modest inn, called the Grand Hotel, where you could buy beer and picture-postcards. This was the halfway house on the way to Cettinje, and your luggage was examined in a kind of stone stable, next door, surmounted by the royal arms and guarded by two gorgeous soldiers. Round the door of the inn were drawn up a number of decrepit two-horse cabs, which did the remaining stage of the journey at reduced rates.

The inn had one big room in it, filled with villagers. A tall old bearded priest in one corner was chatting to three old ladies. He wore a high black cap, and black robes, with a broad band of purple silk round his waist, and stood with his umbrella held under his arm, talking volubly. Basil, almost as soon as he entered the place, asked for the bedrooms, and finding them clean, proceeded to unpack his kit. There was something, however, so bleak to me about the place, and the air was so invigorating, that in spite of the late hour — it was after four o'clock — I decided to push on to Cettinje. The landlord told me that another 'Inglès' had just started, so I bade Basil farewell

and hurried off in the hope of securing a travelling companion.

The road is flat for a mile or two till it starts to climb in zigzags to the top of the great pass of Krivacko Zdrjelo, more than four thousand feet above the sea. Just before the ascent begins, and after passing the king's summer palace, a plain yellow house by the roadside, where he was born, and whence his family sprang — his patronymic was Petrovitch Ngegosh, or 'of Njegus'— I came to the second part of the village, which consisted of low stone huts so like the surrounding piles of stone as to be hard to distinguish in the gathering shadows. It was at this point that I met the other 'Inglès.' Alas! it was more than a meeting, it was a recognition. He noticed that I was not a really keen fellow, as quickly as I spotted him to be the young man in a hurry. We exchanged greetings. I could see how my get-up (very properly) aroused his scorn. My rotten way of jogging on seemed to him ridiculous. I didn't appear to him to have any earnest purpose, but seemed just cumbering up the place anyhow — and if we met a brigand he knew perfectly well he'd have to save me. He was hugging a large 'gun' and he could see that I hadn't even a catapult.

While we examined one another, an old woman emerged from a ruinous hut and saved us a mile or two by shouting and pointing to the track. It was this track, one of the roughest I can remember, and the gathering dark which preserved me. These, with the stiffness of his boots and the weight of his gun, crumpled up his 'strong and silent' constitution. First he perspired unduly, then he ceased

pawing the ground as though he disliked it, then he halted and remarked that after all he remembered he wanted to have a further look at Mount Lovcen — and thought he'd return to Njegus. I imagined him engaging Basil in conversation at dinner, and laughter carried me up to the top of the pass.

The first ascent had been so rich in views that when I now stopped at the top to rest I was unprepared for anything finer. Yet, what I saw was almost stupefying in its sheer sublimity, making me feel a tiny dwarf peering at some vast battlefield of the Elements. Looking back the way I had come, I could see, beyond the plateau of Njegus, the summits of the rocky hills I had climbed and crossed, and in the far distance the grey Adriatic, ending now in a line of crimson all along the western horizon. Looking towards the right, I could dimly see the silver gleam of Lake Scutari and in front of me in the direction of Nicksitch was a far-stretching country of crags and hollows, bleak, stony, and closed in by mountains rising range after range, dark blue and mysterious in the gathering dusk. It was hard to imagine how any human beings could live in this horrific wilderness. Indeed, save for tiny patches of cultivation wherever a little earth had gathered in a cleft of the rocks, there seemed nothing for any one to live on, and I was reminded of a story that had been told to me by one of the officers on board ship, about the creation of the country. It appears that when God was making the world, He sent down the angel Gabriel with a big bag of stones to sprinkle here and there, but the bag unfortunately burst, and all the stones fell on Montenegro!

After attempting more short cuts, one of which, by bringing me to the brink of a precipice, nearly ended my story abruptly, I stuck to the safe highway. The details of the landscape now faded swiftly away, for there is hardly any twilight in the Balkans, and night fell, impenetrable and moonless. A curious, indescribable feeling of happiness, confidence, exhilaration now ran through me. I sang out loud in sheer joy of living and hurried on along the white, deserted road. After about an hour's walking I came within sound of a party of sheep and goats, hurrying along, tinkling their little dinner-bells. A small boy detached himself from the custody of the flock when I caught up with it — I learnt afterwards that everything in Montenegro is done for you by small boys — took me by the hand, whispered something in my ear, and led me to a cottage with a lamp burning outside it. In the windowless interior there was a wooden counter on which stood two or three greasy black bottles, some glass drinking-vessels with handles, and a guttering candle. From behind this counter a handsome, rather morose young woman surveyed me deliberately. A melancholy man, with the heavy butt of a pistol appearing from his belt, leaned against the wall in one corner. On the right I noticed, through a rough hole in the stones, a further room, filled with smoke, and the sparks from a log-fire burning in the middle of the earthen floor. A baby, apparently sewn up in skins like a tiny mummy, was swinging to and fro by the side of the fire, in a kind of rough hammock. The morose young woman and I bowed ceremoniously to one another as I entered and she served me silently with wine, in return for

which I handed her a small coin, and received back a most embarrassing quantity of change. We bowed again; the small boy once more inserted hot fingers in my hand, led me back into the road, and returned to his flock. This little adventure seemed to accentuate the sudden unreality of everything: I felt as though I were having curious and fantastic experiences in some dream from which presently I should awake and find myself once again in the twentieth century.

I did indeed go through some such process of awakening when, after another hour's walking, I turned a corner and saw all at once, some way below me, in the centre of a broad plain, the even rows of lights which I knew must be Cettinje. They shone in the crisp and icy air like golden stars reflected in a dark-blue lake. The sight of them, however, was inspiring; it came over me in a flash how hungry I was, and I reflected that I might after all arrive in time for dinner at the hotel. My pace quickened, half-an-hour went by, then an hour, but still the lights seemed scarcely any nearer.

Indeed, it seemed fully two hours after catching a glimpse of the place that I passed thankfully under the first of the arc-lamps suspended over the middle of its broad, tree-lined boulevard. I was very far, even yet, from my dinner. Practically the whole of Cettinje was comprised in this one straight street, which to the tired voyager seeking the inn appeared to be interminable. The first house I passed was the palatial Embassy of the Austrian Empire. The town at first seemed to be deserted, but as I hurried on I chanced to look on my right and discovered the reason. Through an open doorway I could see a

dimly-lighted parade-ground, packed with silent, perfectly motionless soldiers. They were dressed in khaki and standing at attention—I suppose they were being inspected. This vision of a trained and equipped army was startling, and quite upset all my preconceived notions of the Montenegrin mountaineer. I feared I was never to see my fancied brigand with his armoury of antique weapons gleaming from his decorative belt! First umbrellas, now khaki uniforms! The road after I passed the parade-ground became more animated. Gramophones blared American tunes from the numerous small cafés, in each of which Montenegrin 'nuts' with the correct fag-end of cigarette depending from their moustaches could be seen lolling across a billiard-table. In this part of the town there was considerable movement, and a constant coming and going of soldiers in uniform. They looked splendid creatures, of enormous height and girth. Among the officers they saluted were several unmistakable Russians. I thought I should have collapsed under the weight of my knapsack when I came at last to the king's plain yellow house, and some one pointed out to me my inn close by.

III

Cettinje is on the western edge of Montenegro and most of the characteristic part of the country lies to the back of it. It had two inns, the Grand Hotel and the Hôtel Reinwein, and they were both much better than anything which (in 1912) existed at Cattaro. Comfortable and clean and in the hands of persons well-disposed towards the English, it was hardly surprising that they were visited by a steady

stream of tourists. If the country had been a little more 'settled,' the Turk a little farther away, there seemed no reason why coloured placards of 'Cettinje for health and pleasure' should not decorate our railway stations. Those who revel in 'native costumes' could hardly be happier than in Cettinje: indeed, just as I was entering the inn, an English young woman remarked in ecstasies, 'Look, mother, look; here's the real *type*!' as a Montenegrin brave walked past her.

The sights of the little red-roofed town were easily seen. It lay, like Njegus, in a broad, comparatively fertile plain shut in by bare stone hills, and the town was almost all contained in the one long street, the broad Katunska Ulica. The houses were little, low, two-storied buildings, all of different colours — green, mauve, pink, drab, light blue. Here and there was a larger house; and one pretentious *art nouveau* villa, built right on the street, was pointed out to me as actually belonging to a Montenegrin subject. I did not admire it. The other big houses were the Embassies, and both those of Austria and Russia were so large as to put in the shade the king's modest home. The Russian Embassy was particularly imposing. It was pleasant to note that our own Embassy, which was being completed at the time of my visit, did not make this error of taste, but was a pleasant, long, low building well in keeping with its surroundings, and no larger than the palace near which it stood. It was rather a shock, though, to discover that we had no Minister resident in this the centre of all Balkan intrigues. For five years, they told me, since the departure of Mr. Kennedy, there had been no

British Consul or representative in the country. Mr. Kennedy had evidently made himself well known and respected all over Montenegro during his term of office, for he was still remembered and spoken of. 'Why can't you send us back Mr. Kennedy?' was the remark one heard everywhere.

It was surprising to find how many of the peasants spoke excellent American. Apparently it had long been the custom for the young Montenegrin to seek his fortune in the United States. In 1911, they told me, when King Nicholas was forced to issue a degree restricting emigration, there were as many as twenty-five thousand of his subjects in America. The fearful poverty of their fatherland was so evident on every side that it was hardly to be wondered at that many of the young men went abroad to seek their fortunes. Most of the people I spoke to seemed to have a great liking and respect for the English, particularly as individuals; but it was somewhat of a jar to discover that the decay of our national prestige was everywhere discussed, and taken as a matter of course, in this remote mountain village.

An ancient convent with a church containing the tombs of the Petrovich dynasty, situated on the wooded slope of a hill; various Government buildings, barracks and ammunition factories; the houses of the Crown Prince and of Prince Mirko; an excellent girls' boarding-school, founded by the Empress Feodorowna of Russia; a small stucco 'theatre' like a Welsh conventicle, used both for the meetings of the Deputies and for inferior cinematograph shows — these made up the little round of 'sights.' Opposite the king's new palace was the old palace or *Biljardo* — a long, two-storied building, painted a

bright red, which was used partly as a grammar-school and partly for other Governmental purposes. It received its name from its billiard-table, the porterage of which up the 'Montenegrin's ladder' from Cattaro was such a terrific business that it had never been forgotten!

It did not take me very long to get the hang of Cettinje, but the bleakness of it made at first a rather ungracious impression. It was, however, clean and healthy, civilized and well-managed. An air of good government and of safety of life and limb, an atmosphere of conscious rectitude pervaded it. There were none of the dangers here which make life thrilling in the outskirts of Paris or in a Welsh mining village. I could not sit and dream at all in this quaint little 'dream city.' Its air of virtue — and what a magnificent air it was! — made one anxious to *do* things, to climb mountains, to undergo hardships.

At the time of my visit King Nicholas' ultimatum to Turkey was on the point of being presented, and the hotel was very full of foreigners. One of them, an Englishman who had lived for a year or more in the country, told me many things about the little town which made it seem more interesting. He told me of the skilful diplomacy of King Nicholas, by which he set off one great Power against another, played Austria off against Russia and used Italy as a make-weight. I saw King Nicholas one morning exercising a fine grey horse in the little park at the back of his house — a giant of a man, of a vast breadth and weight, and with a fiery eye. My English friend informed me that the chief faults of the Montenegrins were their inordinate vanity and

their gambling propensities. He told me a great deal about the blood feuds, pursued for generation after generation, and only to be ended by the last survivors of the warring houses throwing stones ceremonially into the waters of a river, up to the number of the slain. He pointed out to me men in the town whose time, sooner or later, would come. They put their affairs, if they had any, in good order and waited fatalistically till the hour when a little puff of white smoke from behind a boulder should mark the gunshot which would send them to their account. It was the law of the Vendetta.

I was disappointed in not seeing any of the *guslars*, the troubadours who, as with all primitive peoples, go about the country singing the exploits of their great heroes. The *gusla*, I was led to understand, is a kind of rough violin with one string to it, on which horrible wailing noises are perpetrated by a short curved bow. The singing to which it is an accompaniment is said to be in a mournful minor key.

I never got tired of watching the Montenegrins stalking majestically up and down their broad street, swinging their *strukas* (shawls) from their shoulders, or showing their white teeth in their indolent smile. The excitement in the place was considerable: the soldiers, in smart uniforms, crowded the street, and I was told that their equipment and the *matériel* supplied to their army by Russia were of the most modern and up-to-date kind. The king appeared to be immensely popular — a true father and leader of his people, whom he had several times led to victory against the Turks, notable in the war which ended in 1876, just when

he was on the point of bombarding Scutari. It has been said that all the Montenegrins are gentlemen, and that after the great defeat of Kossovo, in which the Turks destroyed the Empire of the Serbs, in the middle of the fourteenth century, the Serbian nobility fled to the Montenegrin heights, where they have been established ever since, and maintained their freedom during five centuries of unremitting warfare, until they were shamefully robbed of it by their allies in 1919. The old king was a celebrated Slav poet and wrote many plays and poems, of which the chief is the well-known play 'The Empress of the Balkans,' which was first produced in May of 1885.

It was all very interesting and I was obsessed by the thought that I ought to be finding it so. Yet I could not get away from the conviction that, do what I would, Cettinje was a disappointment. If I am to enjoy wildness, I suppose I must have warmth. Some squalid, low-lying, ill-governed, villainous Turkish town with bazaars and sweet coffee and cigarettes and wickedness would have appealed to me far more.

Indeed, the only thing about Cettinje which roused me to enthusiasm was the magnificent patriotism of the king and his subjects, and their wholehearted devotion to their country. My friend in the hotel lent me an interesting book about the country by an American writer, Mr. Russell, which contained a rough translation of the national ballad or *piésma*, made for his people by King Nicholas. The thought, if not the actual words, ran in my head as I left the little mountain capital on foot for Riecka. Mr. Russell's translation of the ballad, which be-

gins, '*Onamo, Onamo, Za br'da*' ('Out there, out there beyond the mountains'), runs as follows:

Out there, out there beyond the mountains,
My Czar has ceased to speak, they say;
Of heroes was his speech that day.
Out there, out there beyond the mountains,
In some dark cave beneath the hill,
They say my Czar is sleeping still.
He wakes! and rising in our wrath,
We'll hurl the proud usurper forth.
From Dechan's sainted race awakes
A single prayer within that shrine,
And Paradise is surely mine!

Out there, out there beyond the mountains,
Where the blue sky to heaven her light
Is breaking — brothers to the fight!

Out there, out there beyond the mountains,
Where tramps the foaming steed of war,
Old Jugo calls his sons afar
To aid! to aid! — in my old age
Defend me from the foeman's rage.

Out there, out there beyond the mountains,
My children, follow one and all
Where Nikola, your Prince, doth call:
And steep anew in Turkish gore
The sword Czar Dushan flashed of yore,
Out there, out there beyond the mountains!

II

ANTIVARI

I

Without doubt there was something in the biting air of Cettinje which spurred me to energy, to feats, indeed, of athleticism on which I can only look back in alarm and wonder how I did them. Once more scorning the stuffy little motor-omnibus — there was one which plied between Cettinje and Podgoritza — I set out at seven o'clock, on a misty day, to walk to Riecka, with a vague idea that I should be able to get from there to Antivari. I heard one could get a steamer across the lake from Riecka to Virpasar, also that there was a light railway from Virpasar to Antivari: but no one seemed to be sure if the two 'corresponded.'

The road to Riecka starts behind the theatre at Cettinje and passes the hospital, which was empty enough when I saw it, though a few weeks later it was to be full to overflowing with wounded men. As I walked, the mist gradually cleared off, and by the time I reached the top of the mountain ridge at a point called Bella Vista the sky was perfectly clear and the view extraordinary. Far below, among the dark hills, one could see the veiled silver of Lake Scutari, bounded on the Albanian side by the 'accursed mountains,' the Procleti Gori of Albania, whose peaks have the appearance of ebony, topped with a filmy cap of snow; while on the right the distant Adriatic could be divined rather than recognized.

The road after this point sinks steeply by the side of bare Karst hills, with the lovely and fertile valley of Dobrskoselo a thousand feet below it on the right, and after many zigzags reaches Riecka. I was often able to cut off considerable distances by clambering down among worn rocks, but the footpaths and the main road were alike thronged with people. Laden donkeys picked their way up and down the steep tracks, while stores and material required by the military authorities were being dragged up and down the road, in a constant succession of rude wagons. The women, of whom there were crowds, often seemed to be carrying as heavy burdens as the donkeys, while the men, very indolent and handsome, seldom carried anything besides their weapons and the perpetual cigarette. I was much amused, just after beginning the final descent into Riecka, by a little group of boys who passed me on their way to school. Each had his large black umbrella under his arm; two of the smallest were smoking cigarettes, and the rest were saying aloud their French verbs. They laughed at me and said 'Good-bye' in English as I passed.

As I left the highlands and got farther down the valley, the temperature grew correspondingly warmer. After Cettinje to walk into Riecka was like entering a conservatory, and the whole countryside altered accordingly, growing less rugged and more fertile and luxuriant. The lower slopes of the hills were thickly wooded, and there were many fine fig trees by the rushing trout stream in the centre of the valley.

Riecka turned out to be an enchanting little town, chiefly consisting of one long street of small

houses facing the river, with shops on the ground floor, under green-painted wooden balconies. At the entrance of the village some fascinating bakeries and cookshops, all open to the public gaze, reminded me, by the delicious odour which came from them, how fearfully hungry I was. The river which the picturesque street looked on to was the trout stream of a kilometre or two back grown suddenly big — a delightful, clear, tree-shaded river, crossed by two very handsome stone bridges, under which the big trout and the *scoranje*, for which the place is famous, shelter from the sun. By the time I reached Riecka the sun was already very strong, as strong as an English midsummer, and the scene was sparkling and delicious. The broad road between the houses and the river was quite a thronged promenade, all the people, of both sexes, wearing the native costume. Four or five very handsome boys took charge of me as I loitered on the old bridge looking down at the fish in the clear water. One of them, taller than the rest, with a bold head, flashing brown eyes, and an olive complexion of great loveliness, took me across to an old woman resting under a tree with a basket under her arm covered with large green leaves. She uncovered the basket when I drew near and the boys filled all my pockets as full as they could hold with luscious green figs. The simple-minded old creature wanted to give me change out of a piece of ten centesimi which she selected from the handful of coins I offered her. I do not think I have ever tasted anything in my life so ambrosial as those figs, after my three-hour tramp from Cettinie.

The boys insisted on accompanying me along

the highway to the spot, about a mile and a half farther on, where the river suddenly widened and I saw the little wheezy grey steamer moored to a pier, which was to take me down to Lake Scutari and across to Virpasar. On the way the brown-eyed boy picked me an immense bunch of mauve-pink cyclamen which — when I reached the white stucco house which contained the booking-office — he presented to me with a charming smile. I am convinced that the Montenegrin small boy has the nicest manners of any one in the world!

Inside the dépôt I discovered that the steamer would not start for over an hour, that it ran in conjunction with the train from Virpasar to Antivari, and that the fare for the entire journey by train and steamer amounted to only four corone. The young man who gave me this information wore elegant clothes in the Birmingham style (self-measurement: fit and cut guaranteed) and a becoming fez. He had a pale face and heavy Oriental eyes and spoke admirable French. He took a well-bred lack of interest in me, and was evidently a travelled person in an advanced state of civilization, for I saw a novel by Willy open on his desk.

Opposite the dépôt was the most primitive *kafana* I had yet seen even in Montenegro. A wooden roof supported by four wooden posts covered some ant-eaten chairs and tables which, on three sides, were open to the winds. The proprietor leaned against one of the posts, guarding a shelf with about a dozen eggs on it in a row, some bread, and a large cheese. A few cases of beer and bottles of *rakia* were under the shelf. There were six or seven unshaven, idle, shiftless-looking natives sit-

ting at the tables when I entered. They eyed me with sleepy curiosity and seemed impressed when I ordered a bottle of Austrian beer — which turned out to be excellent. It was much better than the hard-boiled egg and sour bread which I bought to eat with it, and in the warm sunlight it induced a delicious sleepiness. An old blue *diligence* drove up, as I crossed the road to explore the steamer, which seemed of an immemorial antiquity and was crowded with peasants all carrying immense untidy packages. From which of the villages it had come I did not discover.

I found I had still more than an hour before the steamer would start, so I lay on my back in the hot sun, on the inclined wooden slope which led down to the boat, watching out of half-closed eyes the fish jump in the shadows under the trees or the light dancing on the dark green water. It seemed impossible to believe that only a week before a whole battalion of Turkish soldiers, embarked on *londras* (native sailing-vessels from Scutari, about the size of fishing-smacks), had been ambushed and massacred a few miles from here, and that their bodies were now probably bobbing about in the lake! Such, however, was the story I had heard repeated everywhere at Cettinje, and the sight a little later of some red fezzes floating in the water in part confirmed it.

I was falling peacefully asleep when the little steamer — it was called the Danitza — suddenly emitted an ear-splitting hoot, and I jumped hurriedly to my feet and rushed on board just in time. Never before had I been on such a shaky, dirty little tub. Before the lake was reached we had still

some miles of the river to traverse, the passage among the tangled masses of water-lilies being marked out for us by rough wooden stakes. In spite of their help so sudden were the turns and so bad the steering that we several times nearly ran aground. On either side of the river were steep hills, with loftier mountains looming up at the back of them. Every now and then we passed a little cluster of round huts. Black punts, which rose to high points at bow and stern, were moored against the bank near them. Several villages I noticed seemed utterly ruined and deserted, as though they might recently have been sacked by an invader. There was no sign of any human being, but occasionally on the marshy ground at the water's edge, with its beautiful neck curved like a question-mark, a crane made a white dot against the green of the hillside. At last we turned our final corner, and the broad expanse of the lake, fringed with marshes full of duck, pelicans, and cranes, lay ahead of us.

This first view of Lake Scutari is quite unforgettable. It seems to stretch to infinity save where, here and there on the horizon, the black crests of the mountains, under a halo of snow, appear, towering in an unreal way above the clouds. After passing an island covered with houses and fortifications, the fortress and arsenal of Lesandria guarding the mouth of the river, and the twin-peaked island of Vranjina, and steaming for half an hour or so across the open water, we turned up a canal which wound amid marshy fields to the village of Virpasar. This village, for the terminus of a railway, was far from imposing. It boasted a little round stone watch-tower, from which doubtless, for centuries past,

anxious eyes had scanned the lake in the direction of Scutari for the advance of the Turk; it had also a pink shed which served as a railway station. These, with a bridge, and a circle of stone cottages facing an open market-place, were all there was of it. The village was surrounded by marshes filled with wild fowl, about which cows roamed with small boys in pursuit of them. It had secured an unenviable notoriety among travellers for its evening concert of frogs, and for the deadly fever mists which rise at sunset from the swamps. In the station yard I found two Turks sitting placidly on their heels, like tailors, and doing business together. Nothing could have been more peaceful or contented than their appearance, or more primitive. Virpasar was not, however, nearly so uncivilized as it first appeared to one at least of the hungry collection of tramps and brigands who got off the Danitza. Inside the pink station shed was served a luncheon of such surpassing excellence, combined with cheapness, that its memory Time, with me at all events, has not obliterated. About a dozen people, in shiny European clothes — Italians, Germans, and Austrians — collected to eat it; the majority of them, I fancy, were going by the bigger steamer to Plavnitza, *en route* for Podgoritza. We began with eggs, followed by a mayonnaise of lake trout, continued with a tender chicken, and concluded with an unusually delicious sweet, while the charge was three corone. I had not eaten such a meal since leaving Ragusa, and the only explanation of it that I could think of was that the authorities realized what was necessary to prepare the voyager for the Montenegrin railway.

II

There was, and perhaps there still is, only one line of railway in Montenegro, namely that between Virpasar and Antivari, though a line was 'projected' to Riecka, and thence through Podgoritza up the Zeta Valley to Nicksitch. From Virpasar to Antivari is a distance of twenty-seven and one half miles, but to get from one place to the other a mountain barrier three thousand feet high has to be negotiated, so that the little railway, all things considered, really did the country great credit.

The train into which I climbed, after draining the last drop of the luscious Turkish coffee which completed my luncheon, consisted of three carriages, drawn by a little dark red engine. There were only two other passengers and they looked more like Albanians than Montenegrins. I had plenty of chances of observing them, for out of all the other compartments they chose mine to sit in. I confess I could have wished, when I saw their formidable cutlasses, pistols, and other weapons, that things had fallen otherwise.

We trundled along to the head of the fertile valley, and then began our zigzag ascent of the flank of the mighty Rumija, doubling and redoubling on our tracks, and rising in greater loops while the air grew steadily cooler. At last we reached the end of our climb, the guard came in and shut all the windows and lit an evil-smelling oil lamp, and with a shrill hoot from the engine the train dived into the tunnel. This tunnel is constructed just under the celebrated Sutormann Pass, across which, in the seventies of the last century, the Montenegrins fought their way heroically to the sea. The passage

of the tunnel took a long time and I was glad of the lamp, for my Albanian fellow passengers, who sat nursing their pistols and their yataghans, did not inspire confidence.

The train drew up, as soon as it emerged into daylight, at the usual little pink house. This one bore a number on its side, like the lodges on Italian railway lines, while the name Gytopmah, in Cyrillic characters, above its front door, announced a seemingly non-existent village. While the engine paused to recover from the strain of dragging itself three thousand feet up into the clouds (or else to allow the guard to kiss his mother, which he did with great enthusiasm), I stumbled out on to the permanent way in the hope of discovering where I was. In heaven, evidently— suspended like great Jove in mid-air, upon a cloud! This was the first impression. London eyes, accustomed to narrow slits of streets and the subtleties of tiny urban landscapes, may perhaps be forgiven for not taking in more at a time. For it was indeed a stupendous view; we had pierced the mountain and had emerged triumphantly on the other side. I found myself standing on the top, as it were, of a great amphitheatre of hills which sloped gradually down to a wide bay, lapped by the gleaming waters of the Adriatic. Immediately below me white clouds clung like gauze to the hillside. The whole of the middle distance was much less distinct than the land which fringed the sea, the details of which I could distinguish clearly. On the left of the bay jutted out a low, reddish promontory sheltering a roadstead, in which about a dozen dots of vessels lay at anchor. Some large houses shone up white against this head-

land and faced the shipping, but there was no trace of a town. Still, this, I knew, must be Antivari. On the flat meadowland which fringed the shore, almost in the centre of the bay, was another white building, which I guessed to be the Crown Prince's country villa, Topolica. Far round on the right, facing the headland of Antivari (the Punta Volovica), was another headland, fortified, which I found afterwards looked down on what was then the Austrian port of Spizza.

Save for the bitter cold, I would gladly have spent an hour in this eyrie among the clouds. During my wanderings in a country all of which is in the grand manner, I had so far come across no view so curiously thrilling. One could imagine how a conquering army which had fought its way over the pass would be rewarded by it. I don't suppose even Xenophon's ten thousand Greeks could have shouted more joyously 'Thalassa! Thalassa!' than those intrepid Montenegrins of half-a-century ago. I turned to look back at the barrier of rock which the invading army must have surmounted. A few hundred feet above me was the great frowning fortress — battered now and half-ruinous — which had proved unable to guard the pass. I noticed that there was another fortress, almost in a straight line with it, immediately below me, and below that a third — a whole series of shattered fortifications which must have been the scenes of bloody and desperate fighting.

A cry from the guard, who had now withdrawn himself from the maternal embrace, brought my reverie to a hasty end, and I hurried back to find the train had evidently been kept waiting for me.

The Albanian brigands scowled: but we had to stop again, though, because a number of the guard's mother's hens were discovered established comfortably in the first-class carriage. When they had been dislodged we began once more our laborious descent. We passed, winding and twisting, through grey-green olive groves, fragrant and melancholy, and waited interminably at little villages nestling under wooded spurs of hill, that had been invisible from the heights. At last, after a journey which seemed ridiculously long for what had appeared to be the distance, we reached the belt of level ground which runs all round the bay, and the engine turned, panting, towards the left and hurried in the direction of the shipping and the white hotel. A mile, and then, after passing some recently burnt goods-sheds that were still smoking and warm, we stopped with a jerk at the station of Antivari.

III

A squalid line of Turkish cottages, darkened by trees, greeted me as I left the station yard for the highway; a few better buildings were encountered when I reached the sea-front, among them the Austrian Consulate; and then on the left, on the slope of the headland, about fifty feet above the level of the road, was the astonishing hotel. I knew vaguely before I started that there was an hotel of some kind at Antivari, but I had certainly never expected anything like this. Imagine it! A suave manager greeted me in the hall in perfect English, in a manner that recalled one of the more prosperous caravanserais in his native Switzerland. He handed me over to a neat maid in white apron and

black alpaca, who led me to my room, a room distinguished, in a semi-civilized country, for the *confort moderne* referred to on the establishment's exquisite notepaper. I opened my eyes wider and wider, and wondered if it could really all be true, and who it was who had established — surely for his own amusement — this oasis of comfort in a wilderness of stone huts. In the music-room I discovered to my delight an English newspaper not more than a week old, one or two battered Tauchnitz novels, and the inevitable Englishman. The Englishman was of the usual enigmatic type that lives happily and contentedly in any remote corner of the globe. His hair and moustache were a little whiter than iron-grey, and his face was dark red and deeply furrowed with wrinkles, and he wore a suit of dingy white flannel, with the sleeves of the coat rolled up to the elbow, and a pair of battered tennis-shoes. A kind of sombrero lay on the table by his side. He waited for me to speak to him first, but when I did so proved the soul of amiability, and offered at once to show me all the sights. We went out together and explored, and he certainly proved a most interesting guide.

Modern Antivari, it appeared, was the work of an Italian company which had obtained a concession some years before from the Montenegrin Government to carry out harbour works and to build the railway. It was this company which had constructed the fine hotel and its annexe, chiefly for the housing of its two hundred employees, and had made the stone quay or *molo* alongside which the Lloyd steamer and the weekly boat from Bari were accustomed to be moored. The company had also

built a number of sheds and *antrepôts*, and made a great show of energy. But just as its marvellous little railway carried hardly any merchandise, and only a very few passengers, so in 1912, the beautiful harbour was doing hardly any trade. (Cattaro, of course, took very good care that it shouldn't!) So great was the hatred then existing between Antivari and Cattaro that a Wednesday boat from Antivari, out of pure cussedness, timed its departure just to miss the big steamer which started from Cattaro for Trieste on that day. If you wanted to go from Antivari to Cattaro on any day except Wednesday or Friday you had to walk, and along a road of which great stretches were still only 'projected.' The Italian company established on the Punta Volovica looked across the great bay to the Austrian fort above Spizza, saying as clearly as its big hotel could speak it: 'Thus far and no farther!'

A few *feluccas* of the kind that hoist lateen-shaped sails of many and brilliant colours, a battered green barque of the most aged and decrepit appearance, the Crown Prince's little yacht, and an Italian tramp steamer were the only vessels in the roadstead while I was there. Antivari seemed an undecided place, the unquiet grave of a variety of projects. Once it was put forward that its lovely climate and glorious surroundings would fit it for exploitation as a gambling-hell, but, to his credit be it said, King Nicholas sternly vetoed this suggestion, with the remark that Monte Negro and Monte Carlo were two different places. Meanwhile the effort to make it into a port was being courageously continued by the company, though of real trade and activity there appeared to be but little. The

occasional motorist and the tourist waiting for the Friday steamer — and these only during certain months in the year — were its sole visible sources of profit, and they scarcely served to mask the politicians in the background.

After exploring the port of Antivari, my companion and I walked inland up the highroad for some distance, and then branched off along a path through olive groves till we came to the dilapidated town of Bar, or 'Old' Antivari, which lies about three kilometres from the sea. My Englishman carried a fat and dilapidated black umbrella under his arm, like a native, and talked volubly all the time. 'Old' Antivari was a great contrast to its modern namesake, and was quite untroubled by any dreams of expansion. It seemed so old that perhaps it knew all about 'progress' and its futility. Approaching it through the mournful olive groves you came first to the great fortress, which originally was in itself 'Old' Antivari, for its massive walls sheltered a complete town, the foundation of which local gossip attributed to the Phœnicians. I should not have known a Phœnician town if I saw one, and Baedeker was silent on the subject — indeed, he is far from expansive about any of the coast between Cattaro and Dulcigno — so I could not vouch for the Phœnicians. Probably most of the old masonry on this coast was the work of the great island republic, for the Venetians had to bestir themselves to maintain their Eastern Empire against the forces of Islam, and built countless fortresses. The stronghold was battered almost to bits in the war of 1874, and left in ruins for many years. It was now used as an arsenal, and no one was allowed inside save

with a special permit from the Minister of War at Cettinje. (A disastrous explosion occurred here in December, 1912, two months after my visit, in which large stores of ammunition were destroyed.)

The newer town of 'Old' Antivari, built outside the castle walls, was, curiously enough, almost invisible from them. It lay in a hollow surrounded by an olive grove, and you came suddenly on it, down a steep incline. The place presented very much the appearance of a Turkish village, and on either side of the main street were Turkish bazaars, where inferior Austrian goods could be purchased at enhanced prices. Turkish faces stared from the dark penetralia of their shops at the intruding infidel. On Mondays and Fridays, the market days, the presence of veiled Turkish women in the streets lent the scene some of the charm and mystery of the East. There were two mosques at Antivari, and also a Roman Catholic Archbishop (and, presumably, a cathedral, though I did not see it). Its Turkish aspect is easily understood when it is remembered that the town had belonged to Montenegro only since 1878, and that it was situated but fourteen miles northwest of Scutari. I was told that the greater part of its twelve hundred inhabitants were Turks, for all the territory from the seaward side of the mountains to the coast is fertile, and was tilled principally by Turks, who are far better farmers than the Montenegrins. I wish now that I had spent longer exploring this curious place, but the unexpected *confort moderne* of my hotel had momentarily gone to my head. I hurried back with my companion to study the wine list, and to order myself the most exotic *apéritif* that I could find,

preparatory to indulging in what the hotel note-paper described as a *bain de luxe.*

I found 'Mahree,' the pretty Bosnian chambermaid, laying out my hairbrushes and pyjamas when I got to my room. She smiled at me with the assurance of a general favourite, sat on my bed, and told me in pretty broken English that she had been in Chicago, that she liked Americans, and that her father lived in Trieste, where she had been born. She showed her white teeth in an engaging smile, and wherever she got her pretty frock from, in that forlorn wilderness, Heaven only knows. She had been at Antivari for a year, she said, and 'Madame' was fearful strict: but she liked the old Englishman, 'Oh, awful much, for he is so goot.' She did not explain exactly in what his 'gootness' lay, though I was quite prepared to believe in it, and what she said inflamed my curiosity about him. We dined together, the Englishman and I, at the same table, in the elegant *salle-à-manger.* It was an epicurean feast, while the cellar of the hotel proved equal to anything I had met with since leaving Trieste. 'Mahree' waited on us, and eyed us both with interest as we ate.

The Englishman had landed, he said, three months ago, from one of the Austrian-Lloyd steamers, and had liked the situation of the hotel so much that he had stayed on ever since. Evidently he had lived in tropical countries; his eye for crops, for possible exports and imports, and the peculiar intonation of his voice, made it likely that he had been a trader; while his disgust when he discovered that my red Meredith was not a Baedeker (as he had hoped) suggested a complete indifference to the

Muses. He was exceptionally well-informed and patently uncultured; he was old; his time was apparently his own; and he spoke no language save English. Though his interest in his surroundings appeared to be of the liveliest kind, yet the only thing which, so far as I could gather, excited his heartfelt enthusiasm was a certain 'temperance' hotel in Princes Street, Edinburgh! Was he a spy in the pay of the Austrian Government, a remittance man, a fugitive from justice, or just a wanderer? I dismissed my various conjectures, one after another, in favour of the last. He was simply a born wanderer, like the man in Kipling's 'Sestina of the Tramp Royal.' He was just the kind of person to say, in the same accent: 'Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was done.' Here he was, for half a year, at Antivari. Next year might see him in a Greek village, in some cheap but comfortable Swiss hotel, or in a South American town looking out for commercial openings. This, I guessed, in Kipling's words, would be his view of things:

> It's like a book, I think, this bloomin' world,
> Which you can read and care for just so long,
> But presently you feel that you will die
> Unless you get the page you're readin' done,
> And turn another — likely not so good;
> But what you're after is to turn 'em all.

III

BUDUA

I

'You cannot get to Cattaro on foot, sir,' said the manager of the hotel, showing his little white teeth. 'There is no conveyance, no road; you must wait for the steamer. There is a local boat on Wednesday afternoon, or you can wait for the Lloyd steamer on Friday.' 'I'm sorry,' I said, 'but I must catch the midday boat on Wednesday from Cattaro, and I propose to get there, somehow.' This seemed to have a good effect, for, seeing that in one way or another I was determined to reach my destination, he helped me by getting the Ordnance Map of the coast of the Primorje, on which I could pick out the track. From Antivari to Spizza was but a two-hours walk; and from Spizza to Budua, where I proposed to sleep, there was a clear track indicated and, most of the way, the highroad. Of the excellence of the Austrians as road-builders I had already had experience. From Budua I discovered I could get on to Cattaro by the *diligence*.

I was quite easy in my own mind as to the possibility of getting to Budua, but it was astonishing that neither guide-books nor any one at Antivari could give me any information about the place.

I woke early on the morning of my departure, to hear the rain falling with melancholy persistence on the gravel outside my bedroom window. It was the kind of soft rain that goes on and on. Come what might, I had to face it, and before eight o'clock I

was attempting to find the short cut through the gardens of the Crown Prince's villa, which the genial Swiss had indicated to me. To add to the bitterness of my chagrin I went nearly a mile along the wrong side of the canal, getting myself wet to the skin in brushing through the shrubs which overhung the track, in the process, and had to return and begin again the other side. When at last I reached the gates of the Villa Topolica — across the flat waste of lands by the shore — they were not only locked but wired with barbed wire. However, by turning inland towards the main road I found the main gate, with a sentry-box by the side of it; and this I was able to open. The grounds of the villa consisted of several acres and were prettily laid out, and crossed by those soft gravel carriage-roads which are a feature of private parks, probably all over the world. It was one thing to get into this nice garden, another to get out of it. However, at last, in a far corner I found a gap through which I could climb, avoiding the barbed wire. I was not free even yet; on the other side of the hedge was a swift brook running out into the sea. Luckily, just before its waters merged with the salt water, there was a spot narrow enough for a jump, and after negotiating this the rest was easy. All the same, that short cut was the longest and most nerve-racking I have ever attempted, and if I have to walk from Antivari to Spizza again I shall take care to go by the highway. The Prince's villa was almost on the last inch of Montenegrin soil, and it was probably by jumping that brook that I landed myself in what was then Austria.

The track led round a small headland on which,

finely situated, were the ruins of a castle. A board with a notice in Slavonic characters was obviously to the effect that trespassers would be prosecuted, but since I could not read it I was not deterred. The castle had evidently had a terrific battering at one time or another. Perhaps it was used to store ammunition or for some military purpose, for a tiny flag was tied to a stick on top of one of the towers which had been roughly patched with stone and the entrance to which was locked.

It was very interesting to poke about among the ruins and to look down through great cracks in the masonry at the tranquil sea far beneath. The most complete part of the ruins was the chapel, which had a lovely floor of black and white marble. And from the higher points on to which one could climb, what a splendid view there was, in spite of the rain! One could see the broad bay with the white villa in the midst of it and the white hotel shining on the eastern headland; and, at the back, rising at first gradually, then with almost precipitous steepness, the cloud-hung Montenegrin mountains culminating in the mighty Rumija. The paths and all the soil about here were a curious brick-red colour, as though soaked in centuries of blood; and against this redness the silver and grey-green olive trees made an exquisite contrast.

If one did not look at the frowning mountains at the back, only at the sea, the well-kept shady path and the lovely vegetation near at hand, one might have fancied oneself in Devonshire rather than the Near East, so gracious was the aspect of the country-side, so blue and tranquil the Adriatic. A reminder of the Orient, however, was given me just

outside Spizza by a little cavalcade of Turkish maidens walking two by two, and bound probably for Old Antivari. Over their heads, covering their little white wimples, they had blankets to keep the rain off them and they wore red Turkish slippers on their tiny feet. They passed me quickly, without looking, as demure as a 'crocodile' on the parade of an English watering-place.

Spizza was a long village straggling round the shore of a bay and commanded by hills ending in a headland on which was the strong fortress of Haj-Nehej, whose guns, much to the chagrin of the Montenegrins, completely dominated the Rada di Antivari. At the entrance of the little town I was confronted by a barricade with a sentry-box, striped black and yellow like a wasp, and a soldier in his shirtsleeves loafing somewhere near it. He looked out of the little guard-room at me as I passed, rather inquisitively, but did not take me for a spy, in spite of my knapsack. Spizza proved to be not an attractive place. There was a little sea-front of pink-and-white houses; a cement and granite quay or *molo* which had been so damaged by the waves that the passengers by the weekly steamer had to be landed in small boats; and, everywhere, soldiers. The place seemed a mere adjunct to a garrison, though it would have been hard to discover any seaside 'resort' with lovelier surroundings. The interval between the village and the mountain slopes was covered with lovely vegetation; fig trees, olive groves and beautiful woods; a wonderful belt of fertile country with white cottages and little churches gleaming out here and there from among the trees.

From Spizza the magnificent highway, oval in shape with broad gutters on either side of it to drain off the water, began in a series of zigzags to climb up over the hill which culminated in the fortified headland. Good roads have a fascination for me and I went on without delay. The rain beat down persistently, yet even this could not conceal the beauty of the countryside. I met very few people on the way, which was hardly to be wondered at, but when I climbed under the shelter of a bridge which carried the road across a splashing trout stream, I found, to my surprise, a party of about a dozen peasant girls in their pretty native costumes, surrounded by a flock of goats. The grouping of these girls made one of those vivid pictures which remain fixed on the mind's eye as clearly as a work by a great artist. Most of them were knitting, and others were sitting doing absolutely nothing save stare vacantly at the rain. When I appeared on the scene, arriving perhaps rather unexpectedly round a projecting corner of masonry, they were almost too dazed to return my salute. They turned, and with one consent gazed at me, 'ox-eyed,' like so many Heras.

The situation was certainly a little embarrassing, for the costume of an ordinary English young man differs in essentials from the free garb of the Austrian Serb, and attracted amazed consideration. Moreover, my appearance must have been still more unusual, for I was soaked to the skin and my knapsack was also wet through. This fact, since the knapsack contained my sodden luncheon, which I now proceeded to eat, seemed to touch some chord of proper womanly feeling in one at least of

the ox-eyed maidens. Very prettily she offered me a drink of warm goat's milk and a piece of cheese, which led one to the reflection that really nice creatures, in whatever part of the world one meets them, bear a remarkable family likeness.

The beauty of the walk seemed to increase with every kilometre, and since leaving England I had certainly seen nothing to compare with the loveliness of this comparatively unexplored region. The road was only partially constructed, and for long stretches there was only a rough path. Sometimes a future bridge would be indicated by a line of thin posts, and occasional piles of hewn stones showed that work was still spasmodically in progress.

For the greater part of the way the sea was always visible through the trees, and the coast formed a succession of the most enchanting coves where the vegetation ran down almost to the water's edge or the sea lapped lazily against a wall of rock. The country seemed fairly thickly populated, and vines abounded, but there were almost as many ruined and roofless stone cottages as there were inhabited ones, and many of the lower slopes of the hills bore the remains of ancient forts. One sign of Austrian rule (and an excellent sign) was a brand-new Government school, white and imposing, from whose open windows, as I passed, came the monotonous drone of children reciting their lessons. A little way beyond the school the road surmounted a low hill, and one saw, below it, a stretch of country ending in a broad and peaceful bay, at one end of which nestled a little town. It was much farther off than it looked, that town; Castel Lastua was its pretty name, and it seemed somehow more welcom-

ing than Spizza. Two white houses, seaside villas perhaps, of local magnates, stood at the entrance to the village, which, like Spizza, consisted of a curving sea-front, with some narrow streets of primitive stone cottages at the back. There were still the inevitable soldiers. Intending to get a glass of wine and to rest for a moment or two, I stepped into a general shop by accident, thinking it to be an inn. 'I guess you want to go next door, sare,' said the corpulent proprietor, Mr. Favo Sugjic. He looked like a very cheery Italian organ-grinder, and had lived in America, he told me, for twenty years. Young olive-cheeked 'Americans' were produced, who came up and inspected me with the solemn, non-committal stare of children. Mr. Sugjic didn't send me away, but brought me a glass of wine from an inner room, and we talked. English-speaking villagers seemed to appear magically from the street, and we discussed everything from America to the Government roads, and the superior virtues of Castel Lastua as compared with Spizza.

It was delightful to come out of the depressing rain into shelter and the sound of something approximating to one's own tongue. Mr. Sugjic told me it was an easy walk of some four hours to Budua, and that there was a new inn there where I could get very tolerable accommodation. He pleased me by saying I was the only Englishman he had seen in Castel Lastua since his return from America two years ago; and sold me an astonishingly bad picture-postcard of the cove. A young man of the audience, who had also been in America, kindly put me on my way, and by climbing up a steep and rocky path I picked up the highroad which here rounded the hillside *en corniche.*

From now onwards there followed the same succession of bays and landlocked coves — perfect little bays with islands in the midst of them, half asleep in a dreaming sea. The slopes of the hills were studded with farms, and little white chapels with tiny belfries, half-choked with the blue flowers which grew also in all the crevices of the walls. Here one could look down on a village half hidden in trees, by the water's edge; there one could look up at a small white church surrounded by a group of cottages, halfway up the hillside. At last I saw below me a tiny *presqu'île*, joined to the shore by a causeway, which was covered by a Venetian walled village, containing about fifty or sixty houses grouped round a little church. It was a perfect architectural jewel, but, alas! it was not my destination. A girl who scrambled up to the high land through the olive groves, bent nearly double under a tremendous load, told me the name of it was San Stefano. However, I had begun now the last stage of my exhausting walk and hadn't time to explore. After crossing one of the many ridges of rising ground, I saw below me a wide bay, and on the farther side of it, in the distance, the grey walls and snowy campanile of Budua.

II

It was about five in the afternoon when I first looked across that bay and saw Budua in the distance — a mysterious line of ancient houses peering over an old sea-wall, and with a new gleaming tower in the midst of it. I knew very little about the place, save the few facts that I had discovered from a German guide-book which a friend in the hotel at

Cettinje kindly translated for me. From this source I learnt that it was built on a low, rocky promontory, that it was of Phœnician origin and the *Butua* of Pliny; that it had been destroyed by the Saracens in the seventh century, then rebuilt by the Venetians, then in 1571 taken and burnt by the Turks, who again in 1687 besieged it with ten thousand men under the Pasha of Scutari, on which occasion it was gallantly defended by the Venetian Cornaro. In modern times it was occupied by the English in 1798 and by the French in 1814. The number of its inhabitants was given as a thousand. Beyond these interesting details I knew absolutely nothing about the town; I only knew that, come what might, I had to spend the night in it. I became filled with excitement at the thought of the adventures that might be in store for me. The rain had stopped now, the sky had cleared and the atmosphere had a peculiar brightness and transparency which seemed to add miles to the eyes' range, and to give a strange glamour to the whole landscape so that all seemed a little unreal, a little too good to be true. As I grew nearer to Budua it became altogether a dream-place, and enchanted — like one of those little cities set on a hill that you see through a window, in the background of so many Italian paintings. It could hardly have looked much different to a traveller approaching it on foot three centuries ago from its appearance to-day. Its walls were still intact and entirely engirdled it, while the only way of entering the town was by one of the two gates. The larger of these, that leading into the main street, was of course protected by the inevitable striped sentry-boxes of the K.K. army. The smaller

gate had no sentry-box, but bore above it the winged lion of Saint Marc, *gules*, surmounting a shield with three *étoiles* on a blue ground. Inside, it was protected by a little image of the Virgin, stuffed with immortelles, before which a tiny light perpetually burned.

I found my inn just inside the main gate, over which its top windows appeared like a man's head over a garden wall, as though to keep an eye on the little wooden sailing-vessels lying at anchor under the shelter of the *molo*. To reach my room I had to climb an outside staircase, which also gave on to the narrow path round the ramparts. This path would have enabled one to walk all round the little town in five minutes, had not the part of it on the side facing the open sea been shut off for the military. The house had only been opened a month, and was called rather grandiloquently the 'Hôtel Balkan.' It was kept by an apologetic Russian Jew with a long nose and that baffling little knowledge of English which is the most dangerous thing the traveller can meet with. He knew just enough to be misinforming. I had arrived dripping, and on reaching my room stripped myself and bathed my aching limbs as well as I could in the exiguous basin provided. Then came the question of clothes. My own were a sodden heap. Luckily, it occurred to the proprietor's one-eyed, plump wife to bring me a set of her husband's garments, which included a canvas shirt fresh from the laundry, some long drawers which tied themselves up with tapes, and a pair of boots which, to my extreme mortification, were too small for me. I had a great deal of difficulty in obtaining what I wanted, owing to my ignorance of

German and Italian. In desperation I suggested 'Französich,' which produced an immediate but unwelcome effect. I understood that I was to be prepared to receive a deputation. Madame, in spite of the fact that I was quite sufficiently clad in her best eider-down, officiously put a towel over my shoulders, and presently ushered in a small girl of about twelve who 'spoke French' and was announced with a flourish of trumpets. Such French! Prunes, prisms, Ollendorff, and the quintessence of all girls' schools were contained in its drawing-room elegance. Alas! it was limited to inquiries as to the way in which I carried myself, and the like. Still, it was something to understand even that. After she had withdrawn, in the second-best suit of the Russian *patron*, and my own wet boots, I was able to get out and explore the town.

I went first of all on to the ramparts. It was delightful to spend the hour before the night looking over the side of the crumbling wall, luxuriant with greenery and with blue flowers growing in its crevices, to where the sea lapped its base.

Looking ahead there was a pretty island with a shrine on it, which guarded the entrance to the roadstead — its name was San Niccolo — and beyond it were the headland which shut in the bay and the lovely hills I had crossed two or three hours earlier.

Looking back, to the left, one saw an amphitheatre of wooded hills, rising to the dark mountains of Montenegro, whose higher slopes (but not the summits) were draped with filmy white clouds which gathered and disappeared like smoke. These old ramparts were an enchanting spot for an idler!

Turning away from the ceaseless interest of watching the shadows gathering over the sea and over the bay, one could look down into the little back gardens of the houses. Riotous plots of greenery they were, more luxuriant and surprising even than the gardens of Venice; and, as in Venice, the trees and climbing plants swarmed unrestrainedly over the stone walls, and hung festooning into the narrow streets.

I left the ramparts with reluctance, to explore the little town. The area it covered was ludicrously small, and most of it was taken up by the fortifications, which were then still used to house the soldiers which gave every Dalmatian port the appearance of a place occupied by a foreign conqueror. Most of the streets were hardly more than six feet wide, and the *palazzi* of a vanished nobility towered up in a way that would have been impressive if one could only have got a proper view of them. Nearly all the houses were adorned with coats-of-arms, so that one wondered where the common people lived. Perhaps after all there was something in the boast made by one of the English-speaking inhabitants — a splendid old Slav with a head like a lion — who came into the hotel after dinner. He said to me proudly of himself and his fellow-townsfolk, 'We are *all* of the nobility, sir, since Diocletian's days.'

The town had a little central piazza containing a church and a good-sized house used as a bank and another building which may have been a garrison chapel. In the street leading from here to the lesser of the two gates was a large and very dark café, in which a soldier was sitting with the golden head of the waitress pressed against his tunic. He sat like that

for about five minutes, holding the head in position with a large, rather dirty hand, and bending down his lips to the tortoise-shell comb which surmounted the top of it. On this spectacle of true love triumphant an old witch of a *dame du comptoir* peered through a little spy-window at the back. She displayed as complete a lack of interest in the love-making as in my entry; and I was just about, discreetly, to leave, when the golden head, scenting a few hellers, disengaged itself and brought me my beer. Having accomplished this service and pocketed her tip, she resumed her position, and the large hand once more pressed her *toupet* against the excited beatings of a military bosom. The twilight grew deeper, the silence more intense, the immobility and indifference of the old woman in the background more pronounced. I hastily swallowed my drink and fled.

My next venture was a surprisingly good general shop a little farther on, where I was so brilliantly charged double for a walking-stick that I became convinced the town of Budua had a great commercial future. I then went out of the town by the little gate, protected by Our Lady, and found myself by a gently shelving beach which showed Budua to be surrounded by the sea on three sides — indeed, to be on a *presqu'île* — like San Stefano. I walked back, through a grove of carob-trees outside the fortifications, till I came once more to the main gate and to my hotel, and found to my chagrin that there was still an hour before dinner, which was not till half-past eight.

III

The restaurant of the Hôtel Balkan was a big, bare, whitewashed room — empty, draughty, and without adornment. The tablecloths looked as though they remained forlornly on the tables for weeks at a time. The few other diners besides myself were huddled together, as if for warmth, at a table in the corner, and there was no bill-of-fare. One took what one was given. The one-eyed wife of the proprietor produced two dishes consisting of flat slabs of meat covered in gravy which, when it came to the point, were not really as unpalatable as they looked. When I had finished eating and had arrived, at last, at the delicious coffee one gets in any part of Europe where the Turk has ever penetrated, a succession of callers came in to see me, headed by the native who spoke English, to whom I have referred already. He had been warned of my arrival in the town — the news of that exciting event must have gone all round the place within an hour — and had come to pay his respects and to converse with me, while half-a-dozen of his friends had accompanied him to watch him doing it.

He was a fine figure of an old man, immensely tall and of the Slav type, with a yellow, furrowed, noble face. He wore a bowler on the back of his head, a black frock-coat, and a pair of very much shrunken white striped flannel trousers. He was a *commerçant*, he said, with a 'beautiful' position at Dulcigno, and was connected by marriage with King Nicholas of Montenegro. He told me that Dulcigno was a lovely town, situated on a rocky hill overlooking the sea and descending into a small bay, about a dozen miles to the southwest of Scu-

tari, and that it had seven mosques. I knew at once that I should never be perfectly contented until I had been to Dulcigno. Alas! it is, I fear, a dream city that will now forever elude me. Afterwards, we discussed the inevitable 'situation,' and the old eyes lighted up and caught fire as he told me that when the time came he would fight for his compatriots. All the young men of Dalmatia — and the old men too — would enrol themselves on the outbreak of war in the armies of Servia or Montenegro. He himself would go at once to Cettinje and offer his services to King Nicholas. He had volunteered, he said, in the wars of '63 and '72. In his opinion the death of the old Emperor Francis Joseph would bring about the abrupt dismemberment of the Austrian Empire. Hungary would break away and become a separate kingdom; Austria proper would be absorbed in Germany, and the age-long dream of the Slavonic peoples would then be fulfilled — the Balkan Confederation. Some of the enthusiasm of the patriot dreaming of freedom for his people after centuries of subjection communicated itself to me. We shook hands with what I am sorry to say was a slightly vinous warmth, and I would stake my final shilling that a few weeks later, when the Balkan War *did* break out, my friend found a place somewhere in the Montenegrin ranks whence he could fire his rifle at the Turk.

The next day the rain had stopped, and the sun shone, but the attentions of one persistent mosquito, whose baleful buzzing and unceasing hunger had kept me awake throughout the night, had robbed me of all joy in existence. To make things

worse, there was no seat for me in the *diligence*, and, as the steamer I must catch for home started at noon, there was nothing for it but a three to four hours' tramp to Cattaro — ten solid miles — on feet the soles of which had already blistered. Fate, however, is seldom altogether unkind. She sent me on this occasion a Montenegrin girl of about twenty, who was also going to Cattaro, and adopted me as a travelling companion. She wore the usual round Montenegrin cap on her head, a light sleeveless woolen coat over her frock, and comfortable sandals. She managed to keep on knitting a pair of white stockings as she walked, and made ceaseless attempts to get into conversation with me, in spite of my apologetic 'Inglès.' At a little inn, half-way, we drank a cup of wine together, and proceeded on our road very cheerful, and hand-in-hand. She had bright brown eyes and soft brown hair and a lovely brown complexion, and we — or I, at all events — parted in Cattaro with more than a twinge of regret. I could just distinguish her among the crowd on the quay as the big steamer slowly moved away from her moorings.

My memories of Montenegro are still vivid after an interval of many years since I made the little journey here recorded. King Nicholas is dead, and his family has been forced to join the ranks of those exiled royalties who haunt the French Riviera. The Montenegrins, after centuries of liberty, have been robbed of their status as an independent people and merged, against their wills, in the kingdom of Jugo-Slavia. The Great War, that was fought by the Allies to defend small nations, has resulted in the smallest of the nations and the poorest

of the Allies being handed over, defenceless, to its greedy neighbour. Montenegro has endured a reign of terror, but its spirit I can well believe remains unbroken.

THE TRIP TO THE STATES

THE TRIP TO THE STATES

I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

For a good many generations the trip to the States has marked a definite point in the career of the successful English writer, but since the war, almost every English man and woman who earns a living by writing, whether successful or the reverse, has crossed the Atlantic at the invitation of enterprising publishers or lecture agents, in the hope of making good. New York has become the principal art centre of the world, and the aid of American money enables writers and artists in every civilized country to pay their bread and butter bills, and carry on with their jobs. No wonder we flock to it.

When, filled with apprehensions, I set foot in the New World, for the first time, I found the air full of rumours regarding the success or failure of previous literary visitors. So-and-so 'went down awfully well': Such-and-such 'made a complete flop': X and Y cut no ice at all. As I listened, I seemed to see the whole thing in terms of a gymnastic display. There was the vaulting-horse, there the long line of stripped athletes, awaiting their turns. The competition starts. Some clear the horse with the utmost ease, amid the plaudits of the onlookers, and are borne off to banquets by their backers. Others fumble their take-off, fail to get over, and retire, blushing with mortification, to hide their diminished heads.

It all seemed very embarrassing, and 'success' or

'failure' seemed to have very little to do with the actual literary merits of the competitors, but to depend upon the tricks of quite another trade.

Looking back at my own recent experiences, I can see that I made almost every kind of initial error. To begin with, I travelled cheaply in a big ship, instead of more cheaply still in a slow 'cabin class' boat. I was assured that *Knights* travelled by the cheaper boat. On the other hand, Llewellyn Powys and Alyse Gregory were going tourist third in the Mammoth and my old friends Louis Wilkinson and his wife were going down to Southampton to see them off, and this, in my innocence, struck me as a good enough reason for some additional expenditure. It was a mistake, of course. If you arrive on a slow boat carrying few passengers, the interviewers find you with ease; whereas, if you arrive on a monster travelling 'tourist third' they search for you in vain. Those pearls of wit and wisdom which would doubtless have delighted the American public — my first impressions of America — were lost irrecoverably. The small posse of pressmen who came to look for me never found me.

I think perhaps I saw more of the real America on board the Mammoth than I was destined to see on land. The passengers were of every imaginable origin. There were Czecho-Slovaks, Russians, Poles, Alsatians, Italians, Germans, Swedes, Danes, Spaniards, Portuguese and Jews, and Jews and Jews. Anglo-Saxons could not have constituted as many as ten per cent of them. The majority of those I encountered found difficulty in speaking English, some had hardly a word. But I shall never forget, when, on our last evening, the ship's enter-

tainer, after an informal concert, struck up 'My country 'tis of thee,' the fervour which all these people of such diverse racial types, put into the singing of their national anthem. Its words were, I am convinced, the only words of English that many of them knew. Any expression of genuine emotion is impressive, and the emotion here was genuine enough. 'Poor devils,' one thought, 'after the slums of Central Europe and age-old oppressions and degradations, what America must mean to them!'

The Mammoth did not predispose me in favour of American liners. In fact, ever since one of the seamen, who omitted to turn up at boat drill through mere disinclination to attend, volunteered the information that there 'ain't no discipline on this ship,' I never felt really safe aboard her. It took me three days to get a cablegram sent off; and the general slovenliness of the service, the indifferently cleaned decks, and air of confusion prevailing contrasted with anything I had experienced before of ships and their ways. The cabins were unprovided with bells, and if you asked a question no one seemed to know the answer. The food, however, was excellent. Any drinking done on board was done in the cabins, and I shall never forget the look of shocked amazement on the steward's face, at our first luncheon on the dock at Southampton, when I asked him for a corkscrew in order that Louis Wilkinson and I might have a farewell drink together, before the ship sailed. A corkscrew was produced at last, shamefacedly, and the whisky opened. The feeling of abject sinfulness and guilt which I had in thus openly drinking spirits before the eyes of American

citizens — even in English waters and within a hundred feet of English land — was astonishing. When the steward said he wanted to *see me afterwards*, I felt like a schoolboy who has been summoned ominously to the headmaster's study. Evidently it was going to be a 'dry' voyage, and there was something in this prohibition after all. It *was* dry — outwardly. But I fancy that most of the cabins were private speak-easies and that more liquor was really consumed on board, in furtive and uncomfortable circumstances, than would have been consumed in an English ship of the same size.

I was heartily thankful when the voyage was over; and I don't know when I have set foot on land with more relief than I did on my arrival in America. After waiting for nearly an hour with my fellow-unfortunates, listening to the heartbreaking sobs of a wretched woman who had failed to satisfy her examiners and was presumably to be sent to Ellis Island, I came before the eagle-eyed officer. Luckily, up to the present, I have never come within the clutches of the Law. But had I actually been (*a*) an anarchist, complete with bomb, arriving with the firm intention of overthrowing by force the government of the United States, or (*b*) an active and determined bigamist, I do not believe I could have felt more guilty than I did during the officer's inquisition. He seemed convinced that I was one of these English white trash who creep into the United States on false pretences, with no intention of ever leaving them. However, with the moral support of the kind Powys' to back me, I was at last allowed off the ship.

Heavens, how glad I was! The air was so tonic

that my spirits rose from deep depression to boundless confidence. I had hardly deposited my luggage in my hotel and stepped out into West 44th Street before I met Ernest Boyd, looking precisely as he looked when I saw him last in Dublin. The brown beard, the brown clothes, the genial cynicism, the imperturbable independence of outlook, the incorrigible hospitality — all were there, as I remembered them.

'Drop in to-night,' said Ernest. 'Mencken and some other people are coming round.' From that moment my memories of New York consist almost entirely of parties. As I am one of those misguided people who think sociability is an end in itself and consistently put pleasure before business, I disinterred from my pockets not those solid letters of introduction to important people who 'might be useful,' with which I was amply supplied, but a quantity of cards handed me by boon companions in Juan-les-Pins or Montparnasse or in one of those secret and mysterious London pubs which have their international ramifications, which had this sort of message scrawled on the back of them: 'Dear Ted: This is Douglas Goldring. He's a grand fellow, Dick.' The world, as we all know, is a small place and birds of a feather flock together. Those of the New York birds I encountered, who belonged to my sort of nest — which, alas for me, is not a literary one — received me like a long-lost relative. The charm of American hospitality has been written about too often to need any further description here. What I was chiefly conscious of was saying over and over to myself: 'Good Heavens, it's all *true*.' All would have been enchanting but for that

menacing gymnastic performance. Sooner or later I should have to line up, under the eye of my publishers, and enter the competition. While I was enjoying myself and putting off the evil day, a youthful rival with a name sufficiently similar to mine to give reviewers and paragraph writers an opportunity of confusing us, leapt into the limelight. In a word, the electric Louis Golding took the field with Hebraic brio, while his blond and Anglo-Saxon *confrère* was dining in speak-easies with his pals, still awaiting the signal to start off.

Perhaps it was fortunate for me that, thanks to the interference of a *deus ex machina*, in the shape of a boy bearing a cablegram, the signal never came. A family bereavement dragged me hastily back to Europe and put all thoughts of 'ice-cutting' out of my head. Looking back at my hectic weeks in New York from the mellow tranquillity of Provence, I find it difficult to disinter from my recollections much that seems distinctively *American*, except its architecture, and the extraordinary feeling of excitement and of buoyant confidence which the atmosphere of the place produces. In saying this I only confirm what has been said a thousand times before. New York undoubtedly makes Europe seem depressingly 'hard-boiled.'

Of all the great international centres I have visited, New York is the only one in which the American tourist is conspicuous by his absence. One searches for him in vain. For the rest, I never saw a city so indifferent to the minor details of its appearance. (The poorest European town would have too much civic pride not to do something with Washington Square and other open spaces.) I have

never seen such traffic jams; nor such a vast consumption of the more potent and noxious forms of alcohol; nor such spontaneous friendliness and sociability; nor such readiness to listen to proposals and to judge them on their merits. I was never in a town before where the *tempo* of social life was so rapid, nor in one in which the process of pulling down and rebuilding was so continuous. And I never, in recent years at all events, have felt so rejuvenated and so energetic as I did in New York. The charm of London, and indeed of Europe, is, I suppose largely to be found in that strong 'sense of the past' which is always bound up with the life of the present and dominates our ideas of the romantic. New York has, to a heady and intoxicating degree, the 'sense of the future,' and I found it romantic in a way which I have to admit that I did not believe possible.

II

THE SPEAK-EASY

I

To the 'jaded European,' 'effete Englishman,' or 'poor frog' nothing is more amusing in the land of Prohibition than the means adopted there for obtaining a drink. I remember an old friend once saying to me reminiscently, regretfully, 'Ah, my dear boy, Sin *was* such fun.' To recapture this Victorian delight, which the young have never known and the rest of us can but dimly remember, one has only to cross the Atlantic. In England, so near has our effeteness brought us to the bow-wows that acts once regarded as deliciously sinful are now only considered unwise, anti-social, bad for the liver and kidneys, or merely 'not done.' We are even growing rapidly soberer, since, owing to the high cost of alcohol combined with the ease with which it is obtainable, only the comparatively rare types who really like the stuff now waste their money on it. 'Work' has become, more than ever, 'the curse of the drinking classes,' for in order to drink considerably less than our fathers and grandfathers we have to work considerably harder. And, as I have observed, no sinful glamour surrounds our open and unfurtive bottle. The English are, indeed, not only drinking less but at the same time re-discovering their palates. Fine vintages are once more in request, port is being restored to its ancient honourable position in academic lives, and a spot of '75 brandy again triumphs over exotic, stomach-burn-

ing liqueurs. Despite the flappers and their cocktails, we drink less and less for the 'kick,' more and more for the education of the palate and the mellowing of the mind. The vast potations of that (for his period) moderate and abstemious country parson, the Reverend Samuel Woodforde, even the alcoholic breakfasts of Ouida's guardsmen, have for ever passed away. In regard to drinking, it is only when our American friends come over to our side and press upon us whiskies-and-sodas at breakfast that we in Europe ever get the sinful thrill of doing what is wrong, unwise and rather fun. In America, of course, we effete ones get this thrill again and yet again, and all the time. Perhaps even that noble and truly inspiring and persuasive figure, Miss Maude Royden, got an added zest for an occasional cigarette from her recent visit to Chicago. All I can say is that, in every meaning the words can convey, I for my part never knew what whisky could taste like till I went to a speak-easy.

I was not wholly unprepared. Just before I sailed for New York a friendly American Boy in London handed me a soiled card with an address on it, saying as he did so, 'I'm sorry, but this is about all I can do for you.' I did not make any use of that particular card, but I had not been two days in New York before I was introduced to and, as it were, made a member of two or three enchanting 'haunts of vice.' 'Vice,' I suppose, is anything which the majority of a community decide to consider as such. To smoke cigarettes may be a vice, to eat beef, to eat pork, to hold the view that the world is not flat but orange-shaped, or generally speaking to indulge appetites in ways which are not usual in the community of

which you happen to form a part, or to express opinions not generally held at some particular time and place. Vices have obviously much in common with virtues, and the hardened traveller, bewildered by the many different conceptions of commonplace acts held in widely separated climes, must often be at a loss to tell t'other from which, and be forced back indeed on the Greek counsel of perfection, μηδεν ἀγαν — "nothing too much" — as summing up, conveniently, the whole business.

Speak-easies, I am told, exist in incredible numbers all over New York, and cater for all classes and all purses. I went once to a homely Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village, where I had a cocktail made of furniture polish, a bottle of harmless home-made red wine, and a simple, well-cooked Italian meal. Without the furniture-polish I might easily have been in Soho. On several other occasions I lunched or dined in the Washington Square district in quite elaborate restaurants, where the cooking was admirable, the white Chianti completely convincing, and the liqueur with the *demi-tasse* reasonably drinkable. But the speak-easy I best remember was located in a respectable 1860 town house in the 'forties.' You went in, with your introducer, after a stern preliminary inspection, by a basement door, or rather gate. The iron gate unlocked, you found yourself in a narrow passage, with a small bar parlour on the right. After imbibing a cocktail or two (in this case, as far as I could judge, the liquor was wholly authentic), you emerged from below-stairs and entered the restaurant for lunch or dinner. The decorations of the room were in a curious blend of the 'mid-Victorian'

and the Louis Philippe styles; the decorum and respectability would have been almost oppressive but for the joy of the forbidden, the glamour of the 'sinful haunt.' My knowledge of the *Maison Tolérée* happens to be limited — but yes, my mind flew back twenty years to a tremulous hour spent in Marseilles in just such surroundings of dingy, fly-blown splendour. 'Sin' and plush settees must have a subtle connecting link. ('Sin' also, I may observe, costs the earth, wherever you may choose to indulge in it.) The particular speak-easy which I adopted as my own was at one time much frequented by an Anglo-American friend, of hospitable habits. When, on my first visit, I asked the genial Italian proprietor if he remembered Captain Alexander P——, a blend of consternation and respect showed itself at once upon his expressive countenance. 'My God,' he stammered, 'shall I *ever* forget him!' So I had the *entrée*, all right. It was like walking in, as a new member, to a rather terrifying club, arm-in-arm with the Prince of Wales. Incidentally, the best restaurant food I tasted in New York was in this establishment. Or perhaps it only *seemed* the best, since, as we all know, 'a congenial atmosphere' has so marked an effect upon the happy flowing of the gastric juices. Just as 'vegetarian' restaurants are almost invariably incapable of cooking vegetables palatably, so the Prohibition restaurant, even if one is on the wagon of one's own free-will, lacks (for me, at all events) an indefinable something which robs its food of interest. I don't pretend to know why this is. Alcohol may be as noxious a poison as certain of the rich solids with which, with one's knife and fork,

one daily digs one's unavoidable grave. It may even be worse. But, taking the average experience of the human race throughout the ages, it is surely associated far less with crime, punishment, ignominious death, poverty, cruelty and vice than it is with good-fellowship, kindness, fine scholarship, the arts of music, painting, literature and criticism, and, above all, conversation. It is an impartial liberator and solvent. For if it liberates what is evil in the evil, it also liberates all the good qualities of decent people. However, wiser men than I must argue the matter, if indeed it needs to be argued. All I know is that the pleasantest and most illuminating conversations I had in New York were in circumstances in which the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution might never have existed.

II

Of all the great cities in which I have so far set a rather nervous foot, New York is far and away the best for talk. Any Englishman who takes an interest in men and affairs, in the arts, in politics and in life, must experience an enormous sense of relief on arriving in Manhattan. The frightful discipline of English social life which bars as topics of conversation any subject that is in the slightest degree worth talking about, seems mercifully not to have crossed the Atlantic. In New York you can exchange ideas on world-politics, religions, literature, the future of marriage, the war and its ethics, Anglo-American relations — indeed, anything under the sun. And the more ideas of your own you possess, even if they are considered unusual or wrong, the more eagerly you are listened to. I found, during my stay, no

trace of the rigid English upper and middle-class attitude that 'our mind is made up, and we do not wish to discuss the matter further.' The process of gently slamming the door upon all themes of intellectual interest, by which the English hostess preserves the secret of her own inadequacy while maintaining her prestige in the eyes of her guests, is, I believe, unknown in New York society. (I am now speaking, of course, chiefly from hearsay. My own very limited experience, however, fully bore out what other Englishmen with wider knowledge have told me.) At number 163 — I must not mention, of course, the number of the street — Ted, Jack, Lillian and myself, fortified by a few cocktails, used to spend hour after hour in eager discussion. They were not, of course, 'typical Americans.' Indeed, of all the hundreds of Americans I have met in America and in Europe, I have encountered very few that are. What is a 'typical American,' anyway? Perhaps he does not yet exist. Perhaps he is Babbitt? In New York and in Boston I never came across any one who had what I always fondly imagined to be an 'American accent.' The intonation was agreeable, different from ours, *o*'s were broadened into *a*'s, and 'yeah' or 'yep' took the place of 'yes.' Otherwise it was just good, nervous, educated English, strengthened by fresh and vivid turns of phrase. 'Wall, I guess,' and 'Say, stranger,' are, perhaps, only a convention of the English music-halls. Anyhow, I never heard them once. Ted, on my first evening, was particularly anxious for me to tell him what I thought was the average English point of view about America. At this I jibbed. 'I'll talk the donkey's hind-leg off, if you

like, about *one* Englishman's point of view,' I said. 'But what the average Englishman thinks, unless I am he, how should I know?'

'Well, just go on and tell us a bit,' urged Lillian. 'We do really want to sense your viewpoint.' I again expostulated at this, to me, embarrassing request. But I remembered the *aplomb* with which numbers of my fellow countrymen of no more than average intelligence yearly lectured large audiences throughout the States about the Americans and their country, and took heart. I then remembered the many sub-acid comments I had heard in New York about these same 'superior' Englishmen, and lost heart. Anyway, it seemed rough to come to a country for the first time, to meet old friends and perhaps to make new ones, and to be asked at once to express an opinion of some sort about one's hosts. An Englishman or a Frenchman never asks an American to his face what he thinks of England or of France, not because he doesn't care to know, but because, with social foresight, he sees the dilemma. Either the visitor will say what he thinks, with embarrassing candour; or else he will say what he thinks will please, and that also will be embarrassing.

'The awful thing is, Lillian,' I said, 'that I don't believe most of us think about America at all. We just take her for granted. Nearly all our press is pro-American, most of our journalists seem to make a point always of understating the English case in controversial matters between the two countries, so that your traditional popularity in England remains unimpaired, despite occasional sorenesses. Some of us wish you wouldn't do so much propaganda in Europe through your films, especially your

war films; and a great many of us would like America to stay as American as possible and allow us to remain English. London is rapidly becoming Americanized — architecture, music, speech, manners, morals. We badly need a British "Big Bill Thompson" to counteract the insidious American attempts to undermine our national character, change our habits and force prohibition on us. Generally speaking, there never was a time when America had such a vogue in Great Britain as she has to-day. American music, American negro singers, American literature, American plays, American architecture, American cocktails, American business methods, even American slang — they are all the rage with us at present. Hardly any one, except politicians and leader-writers, wants to be bothered with such questions as the debt settlements, the League of Nations, your occasional outbursts of sabre-rattling imperialism, and all the rest of it. When we see scare headlines like "War with England inevitable — says Mayor of Bingeville," we just buy a few more American records, put them on our American gramophone, and start an American jazz.'

'Bootleg gin, that war talk,' said Jack. 'Means nothing.'

'Quite so. As we see it, no war was ever less inevitable or more unlikely. We realize America's financial world-domination and don't underestimate her strength. But we are not in the least afraid of her and we don't really envy her — so the principal causes of war are at once ruled out. What the average Englishman likes more than wealth or bathrooms is personal liberty. If he can't get

enough of that in his own country, he goes where he can. France, incidentally, is about the freest country in the world to-day. America seems to us, from what we can hear, one of the least free. I suppose both our countries think each other vicious and immoral. Your crime statistics, political scandals, and judicial procedure shock us profoundly. Certainly the solid English bourgeoisie thinks that America, by starting the fashion for easy and frequent divorces, has undermined that sacred Victorian institution, the British middle-class home, respectable and enduring. What the rest of us can't understand is, not why you divorce, but why you marry such a lot.'

'Ah, that's the New England conscience,' said Ted. 'It governs our "necking" parties, too. Provides the necessary kick, the spice of danger. Thus far and no further! Besides, the women insist on the ceremony. They know that marriage makes cowards of us all. And, of course, in the land of the Puritans, they like to be respectable!'

Lillian didn't listen to these trivialities. She was earnest and well-informed and scented in me, despite my reluctance to hold forth, a political missionary retired from business. She nosed about like a foxhound to get on the track of my 'viewpoint.' But the volcano was extinct. No 'great words winged to-day' were going to be winged by me. I felt warm and cosy on my plush seat. 'All civilized people belong to two countries, Lillian dear,' I remarked, in what was intended to be a big bow-wow style, '— their own, and that fatherland without frontiers which is, well, the country of civilized people. *Ententes cordiales* between nations, engi-

neered by newspaper propaganda, "hands-across-the-sea" leagues and so forth, are as nauseating to civilized human beings as hatreds between nations, produced and engineered by similar means. As true civilization increases . . .'

'Ah, I thought so,' said Lillian. 'You're really an internationalist.'

Caught at last, the pin transfixing me, I was ticketed, labelled and put away in Lillian's butterfly-case. Would I speak on Friday week? I would not. I would only speak-easy.

III

My encounters with Ford Madox Ford, with Ernest and Madeleine Boyd, and other confrères from across the Atlantic had opened my eyes to the fact that New York, which one is assured so persistently is *not* America, is a great international clearing-house in which, at any moment, one may meet anybody he has ever known. As a centre of civilization, of all the civilizations, I am not sure that it does not put Paris and London completely in the shade. I should not like to live in it, however, for the simple reason that I should not live. I imagine that six months would about see the end of me — but what a six months! I soon got used to running across people I hadn't met for years, and after my encounter with Dick at Number 163, I became inured to surprises. Number 163, like Jimmy's in Montparnasse or 'Mr. K's' in London, was evidently the sort of place where anybody belonging to my small world might be expected to turn up.

I had not seen Dick for nearly fifteen years, and I confess that if he had not hailed me I should not

have recognized him. His erstwhile rather decadent fragility was now concealed by a pointed beard and his clothes no longer had those 'Lord Lillian' graces which had made his appearance notable in 1907. Like his books, he had mellowed. 'It's a funny thing,' Dick remarked, when we had greeted one another, 'but I've just been talking to a chap who knew James Flecker, and all the crowd who used to gather in Isabel Davidson's flat. I couldn't place him, but he seemed to have known us all. Do you remember that absurd tea-party at Isabel's when we solemnly read out our little poems and you disgraced yourself by bursting into giggles when Jack Beazley recited one of his most serious efforts? I think Trelawney was there, if I remember right, and Fremantle.' I recalled the scene vividly. We were a collection of young poets trying rather consciously to create a Parisian atmosphere in a South London flat, and I can't think why I giggled, unless it was because we were all so absurdly solemn. The verse which occasioned my unfortunate lapse has remained in my memory ever since, and I quoted it to Dick:

> Christ Jesus for the sorrowing tribe of men
> Two thousand years gone died the death of shame;
> Rose from the grave, but since is dead again.
> Therefore what boots it calling on His name?
> Now must man aidless bear his joy or graeme;
> Since curse nor prayer the steep-up Heaven can climb,
> 'Take every man his turne, as for his time.'

'I always thought "the young but learned friend" a better poet than James,' said Dick. 'Do you remember his poem, "The Visit," that you printed in your magazine, "The Tramp," with

Trelawney Dayrell-Reed's accompanying picture? And the "Cleopatras" and "Vanavitra"?'

'No doubt he was more accomplished than Flecker was in 1907 and 1908,' I replied. 'But Flecker developed rapidly in the next few years, while the "learned friend" resumed his archæology and, as far as we know, forsook the Muse. Think of the difference between Flecker's first book, "The Bridge of Fire," and the little book I printed for him in "The Tramp" days — "Thirty-Six Poems." And the difference between that and "The Golden Journey to Samarkand." Flecker was a single-minded, hard-working poet. Poetry was his job. I only met Beazley a few times, but it struck me that writing verse was just a diversion in the midst of what, to him, were more serious pursuits. At a guess, I should say he had too fine a critical mind to take himself seriously as a poet, and not enough emotion or native impulse to force him, like A. E. Housman and T. S. Eliot, to produce and publish in spite of a barrage of self-criticism. I don't know. Somehow I have always thought that, through Beazley's self-imposed silence, that period probably lost one of its biggest men.'

'Beazley produced the samples,' Dick observed, in his tottery, quavering falsetto, 'but, after all, Flecker delivered the goods. The older I grow, the more conservative I become in my literary tastes. I like something solid for my money. Shakespeare and Edgar Wallace, you know; they *never* let one down.'

We were joined, at this moment, by two young 'cerebrals,' very fresh from Oxford. They were about the same age that Dick and I were, when

Flecker and Beazley — 'James and John, the sons of Zebedee' — were the twin stars of our circle. Curiously we observed them across the gulf of the intervening generation. They seemed extremely bored, but full of assurance, and their conversation was erudite and brilliant. Their 'reaction' to America struck the new note — that is to say, the note struck by Oscar Wilde in the nineties and banged again by Wyndham Lewis and C. R. W. Nevinson and others since. Apart from the characteristic beauties of New York architecture, a subject worn threadbare by this time, they were delicately enraptured by factories, power-stations, gasworks, the æsthetic beauty of industrial plants. After an overdose of Italy, New York was proving 'so stimulating.'

'There's not much simple gusto about these boys,' Dick observed, as we withdrew into a corner of the bar. 'But they are the genuine article all right. In our young days, as "decadongs" we were a bit of a fraud. We lapped up Trelawney's poems, particularly the one beginning 'I am so tired of all that I remember, So tired of everything that I forget,' with youthful zest. But it was a pose with us. These young chaps really *are* born disillusioned and wearily sceptical.'

'But they nearly all of them write extraordinarily well,' I said. 'And they know such a damned lot. They appear to have read everything in all literatures, to have seen every picture, every play, every dancer . . .'

'That's their trouble,' Dick rejoined. 'They can't help coruscating. And, to a man, they "freely and sportively bombinate." No "cerebral" can

ever help writing rather well, particularly about other people's writings. You couldn't imagine T. S. Eliot, who is probably the best of the lot, or even one of the lesser lights, like David Garnett, ever writing really *badly*. Contrast the fantastic wallowings of a Shelley or a Keats! Would any verse-writer of to-day dare to print anything as bad as a really bad Keats? On the other hand, just look at the work of some of our best living writers — Ford Madox Ford, D. H. Lawrence, H. G. Wells, Violet Hunt, Ezra Pound, for example. They can all give you that cold-shiver-down-the-back feeling, when they like. But when they don't like! Catch Ford in a worried and contracted-for moment, when the Spirit isn't in him. Wrestle with D. H. Lawrence when he's got his nasty-temper-plus-inferiority-complex mood on him, and decides that all the world's a lump of dirt, except himself and a few Indians! Try Violet Hunt, when she falls off her best near-Brontë level. See how you have to clamber about amongst Wells' vast output, before you can dig out the solid chunks of genius. You can nearly always tell genius by its lapses. I love W. B. Yeats' story of finding Synge in Paris, busy writing articles on French poetry, which he couldn't get printed simply because they were so bad. Can you imagine any of the younger generation of literary "cerebrals" ever turning out a really *bad* article, or ever writing a really first-rate novel, play or poem?'

This struck me as being a great deal too sweeping, and I said as much. 'Of course, a trained literary journalist becomes efficient, like any other professional man. And plenty of excellent writers are also

trained journalists. Aldous Huxley is a case in point. But you can't lump him amongst your "cerebrals." From that point of view he is ruined. Sentiment and humanitarianism find their way into nearly everything he writes. He displays all kinds of common, red-blood "feelings" — anger, pity, sympathy, and all the rest of it. Why, at the end of one of his novels, "Those Barren Leaves," I think, he made the hero watch the Italian sunset reflected rosily on the mountains, and come to the conclusion, staggering to a grandson of the great Thomas Henry, that perhaps, after all, there might be a God.'

'Arnold will out,' said Dick, slily.

'I don't care,' I rejoined. 'When you can find a "cerebral" who can feel the shuddering hurts and horrors that push their heads up in "Antic Hay," there'll be a chance for him. If Huxley is too accomplished to write badly, if he can't turn out a "middle" that isn't "delicious," at all events he's one of the few, out of the whole bunch of polished writers, who has a chance of reaching the "cold-shiver" level.'

'There's no passion in modern literature,' Dick quavered. 'No passion! It's all so cold and clever and unrepressed. The mid-Victorian period, that was the period when timely utterances relieved the chaste volcano. There is infinitely more passion in Christina Rossetti and Emily Brontë than in all the "Last night, ah, yesternights" that ever were written by the sloppily dissolute. To get anywhere with the physical it has to be taken to worlds beyond the power of bishops to imagine. If you plunge right through pornography you come out the

other end, into a clear polar air of pagan mysticism; beyond good and evil, in short. No one can do it, not even Joyce, although the icy austerity of "Ulysses" illustrates my point.'

'It's queer what a vogue that difficult and impressive literary eruption has had among the type of people whom Ernest Boyd once brilliantly described as "the chemically pure,"' I observed. 'What on earth can the dear, white-haired spinsters with horn-rimmed glasses, who have bought ten profitable editions of it, make of the thing — beyond getting a thrill from the improper words? What do they know about Clongowes and Rathmines, about Irish Catholic pudicity? How on earth can they understand those pages and pages of condensed Dublin slang? To one who has never walked past a Dublin pub when the door suddenly opens, and a flood of talk, bad air, tobacco-smoke and whisky-fumes pours out on him, I can't see how much of "Ulysses" can have any meaning. Personally I take Mr. Valéry Larbaud with a pinch of salt. Half the book must be incomprehensible, even to Englishmen who have not lived in Ireland, and still more so to Frenchmen and Americans. Why, it is, in essence, the reaction of a poor little Irish Catholic boy, educated at a Jesuit school, who wanted to "leave the room" and didn't dare say so. Now he has got his own back and a good bit more. The explosion has produced a work of genius. Two works of genius, if you include "The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." But I doubt if half their admirers can make head or tail of them; and of the professional critics who have turned out so many hundreds of columns about Joyce, Boyd seems to

me to be the only one among them all who has the necessary qualifications to form a judgment.'

'What about Ezra?' Dick objected.

'Pound is *hors concours*,' I said. 'He has a *flair*. It's part of his gift. And he knows his man, if he doesn't know Ireland. Pound, like Ford, has a pure, passionate, disinterested love of good writing. He is one of the few men living who have a sense of team-work. So long as good literature continues to be produced, it doesn't so much matter to him who produces it, or where it crops up. When I used to see a good deal of him, it seemed to me that he camouflaged extraordinary generosity of outlook in regard to other writers under a mask of rather amusing self-assertion. As a literary foster-mother Ezra has had few equals in our time. Let us look towards Rapallo and drink his health!'

Dick and I consumed two dollars' worth of rye whisky in Ezra Pound's honour and afterwards found ourselves included in a party. Our objective was the "Sugar-Cane" in Harlem, but we stopped *en route*. At the flat we visited first another party was in progress which enveloped us, incorporated us and bore us off to a third and still larger party, where champagne was flowing inexhaustibly and a negro orchestra was working up the excitement. At about five in the morning, standing on Riverside Drive under the pale stars, I decided that Harlem must be postponed. Within a few hours the telephone would ring. Some kind friend had asked me to breakfast and proposed to take me to the top of the Woolworth Building — me, who cannot look out of a fourth-floor window without an internal shudder! Or perhaps it was to see Wall Street, and

Big Business in action. In any case, the hour of my appointment was imminent. I did not feel tired, I never did in New York, but I told myself that I was now past the age when I could stay up with impunity till the hour when the birds begin to sing. We caught a lemon-yellow taxi with a negro chauffeur, and as we darted through the night beneath the towering buildings, Dick began in his high, tottering voice to tell me his impressions of the Americans. 'They are beautifully young, my dear Douglas,' he quavered, 'beautifully young! The vernal charm of their old men, absorbed in trivialities like Oil Trusts or gigantic motor combines, is simply touching. It is good for the world to have one nation at least and a new one, which takes things at their face value. Pop buys a "dook" for Sadie because she wants to feel swell; and a genuine historical medieval castle, for himself, to re-erect on Long Island. Wonderful to be able to believe that the biggest thing must always be the best, the most costly the most desirable! When the goal is so clear, so simple, no wonder they make straight for it, while we others hesitate and are lost. The "big" gesture, the "big" idea, the "big" success, the "big" heart, too. They have that. Sometimes I wake in the night and whisper to myself the blessed words "first national" and "demi-tasse," "toilet" and "elevator," "block" and "cafeteria." Mysterious, evocative words, they give me glimpses of a poem which I shall never be able to write. The place-names of America are often poems in themselves — Manhattan, Nantucket, Oklahoma, Ohio, Kentucky, Salem. How I love them. And the "college boys" and the "co-eds"! No one who has not seen

Americans *in America* can realize their irresistible charm. They go rushing on and take the European visitor with them as long as he can stand the pace. But where are they rushing to, my dear Douglas? *Progress* . . . whither and to what? If we only knew, if *they* only knew, their destination, we might have a glimpse of the future history of the world for the rest of this century. Obviously they cannot proceed at such a rate without getting somewhere . . . or running off the rails. I know swarms of American "idealists." Pacifists, thank God, abound in the States and are immensely powerful. Much recent American literature is magnificent, and they can not only produce such books as "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" and "The Cabala," but they have a public which will buy and read them. But they also pass laws to make men virtuous, virtuous according to the peculiar standards of horrific ladies of boundless energy, with eyes like those of a hanging judge. Thumbs down for you and me, my dear! What Mrs. Lavinia K. Bloggs, President of the First National Council for Male Reform, of Big Rock, Tennessee, says, *goes*.'

'But, Dick,' I said, 'If Oscar was a wily man, Satan is wilier still. What Lavinia says goes. But not very far . . . even in God's Own Country. Not as far as Number 163, anyway. Here is my barrack. Let's meet before lunch at our "Speak-Easy," and toast Lavinia.'

'A bunch, my dear boy,' quavered Dick, 'of chaps.'

A bunch it was.

III

BOSTON

I

'So you're going to Boston?' said Peter. 'You'll find it colder, more austere, more of a piece, less cosmopolitan than New York. Watch out for the New England conscience though, and dust up your culture. Brows are high in Boston. But you'll probably enjoy yourself. Ring me up when you return.'

We finished our rye cocktails and I went along to the Algonquin to pack. L., tall as a lamp-post and slightly bent back as to the head and shoulders, like a tree growing on a wind-swept shore, was waiting for me at the hotel. For the past few days he had looked after me like a sad but kindly nurse. In his company I felt frivolous, irresponsible, insufficiently grown-up and rather inclined to be naughty; and such odds and ends of culture as I have managed to acquire in the course of a life-time got mislaid.

We entered a vast station, the Grand Central, and I felt like an ant crawling across the stone floor of a cathedral. Luckily, thousands of other ants were doing the same, so I did not suffer from agoraphobia. In the wake of our negro porter we left the nave of the cathedral and entered a dark tunnel where the train awaited us. Our reservations, mercifully for me, were in a smoking-car, apparently the only one there was. I gathered that in American trains smoking, while not prohibited, was not considered *quite*. . . . Chewing, on the other

hand. . . . We relapsed into our magazines as the train swept through a melancholy autumn landscape dotted with suburban houses, 'gas' pumps and manufacturing plants. Every now and then an agglomeration of these, bisected by a brightly lit main street, indicated a town. As I peered through the window I found myself wondering whether life in one of these places really was a fuller, more satisfactory affair than life in the mellowed cities of 'worn-out' Europe. Perhaps these 'burgs,' on acquaintance would prove as disappointing as the train which bore me past them, which was certainly inferior in smoothness and comfort to most English express trains.

The next morning I woke early, consumed my iced grapefruit, and set out to explore Boston. It was a cold, clear, sunny autumn day, with white clouds drifting about a pale blue sky. I walked to the top of the street, stood on the steps of the imposing State House, and gazed across the far-stretching Common. On my right descended a delightful street of fine eighteenth-century houses which surveyed the Common as Piccadilly surveys Green Park. Some vandal in the seventies or eighties of the last century has destroyed its ensemble by erecting an eyesore several stories higher than the other houses. Nevertheless Beacon Hill has preserved more of its original character than Piccadilly. Behind it I found a network of streets, a whole quarter, of eighteenth-century brick houses, intact and unspoiled. But for the fact that the houses were obviously well cared for by their owners, these streets would have reminded me of parts of Dublin. Sometimes, through open windows, I

caught glimpses of stately Colonial furniture and mellow family portraits similar to those examples of early American art which I had been admiring a few days before in the Metropolitan Art Gallery at New York. I had not read my Hergesheimer for nothing, and I found myself becoming as sentimental about Boston as any American tourist might be about the London of Charles Dickens.

After I had called on my publishers, L. noting my 'colonial' enthusiasms, carried me off on a sight-seeing expedition. Overshadowed by cliff-like commercial buildings in the centre of the city was the charming Old State House of brown brick, still adorned on the outside with the Lion and the Unicorn, which especially aroused my interest. With the help of this building, of Beacon Hill, and of one or two old churches, one could get some sort of idea of what eighteenth-century Boston must have looked like. The Boston of a century earlier was epitomized for me in a little two-storied seventeenth-century wooden cottage, Paul Revere's house, which has somehow survived the period of expansion and is now piously preserved. But of all the historic monuments which L. showed me, the one from which I got the biggest thrill was an early eighteenth-century church with a high steeple and old-fashioned box pews — called, I think, the North Church — that was crowded with memories of Washington and the War of Independence and filled with an unseen congregation of staunch New England ghosts. By shutting the eyes one could transport one's self in imagination to the great days of the 'Boston tea-party,' when the English settlers in America showed how well they had preserved the essential characteristics of their race.

L. led me up to an old churchyard overlooking the harbour, and together we meditated among the graves of the fathers and mothers of New England and deciphered the touching inscriptions on their tombstones. It was queer to reflect that though these grim old rebels were men of sturdy English stock, they had become, in a century and a half, the national heroes of tens of thousands of little Argentines, Portuguese and Greeks of American birth, not to mention millions of Irish, Italians, and Jews. And all because they had successfully defied King George III, who was, after all, a German. No wonder many Americans are touchy about racial origins and insistent upon being one hundred per cent American. I have heard George Washington spoken of as if he had no earthly origin whatever, but appeared miraculously on the American continent, the legendary founder of a new people. The fact that most Englishmen continue to regard Americans as 'cousins' and the United States as predominantly an Anglo-Saxon country — in other words, to think of America in 'colonial' terms — must be galling to average American opinion. If our statesmen could have put the idea of 'cousinship' out of their minds and regarded the United States as a completely 'foreign' country, formed out of a hotch-potch of European races, many of which have a deep-rooted hostility to England, and an instinctive dislike of Anglo-Saxon civilization and habits of thought, one feels that they might have avoided some of the errors of policy which have endangered Anglo-American amity. During the short time that I was in America I was made to feel over and over again that England's persistent woo-

ing of America's friendship, the fulsome generosity of Mr. Baldwin's debt settlement, and the rather grovelling attitude of the English press whenever controversial matters arise between the two countries, have been misinterpreted and have to a large extent defeated their own object.

As we walked along briskly towards our lunch — Mr. G. had invited me to the Saint Botolph Club to meet Conrad Aiken, Mr. Samuel Merwin, and Professor Peterson, the author of the new 'Life' of Havelock Ellis — I am afraid L. must have found me silent and abstracted. I couldn't very well explain to him that though I am now, politically speaking, a comfortably extinct volcano, an individualist relapsed into engrained Toryism, I still occasionally allow myself secret orgies of rumination on 'world' topics. There was an exalted and happy period of my life when I was a fanatical, single-hearted 'idealist,' a volcano in totally ineffective eruption, a mover in movements, an utterer of leaflets, a compiler of 'free literature.' It seems remote enough now. Still it has left me a dyed-in-the-wool pacifist with a taste for Wellsian discussions, an intensified love of personal liberty and a strong dislike of the personified state. How much nicer Americans are than America! Columbia (hail), Britannia (rules the waves), Deutschland (*über Alles*), Sverige (fosterland), Erin (my grief) and so forth, are all very well in their way — like the League of Nations and the Brotherhood of Man. But I find as I grow older that when it comes down to brass tacks there is a deal more comfort in individual people and places than in vague abstractions. I much prefer Louis Wilkinson to Czecho-

Slovakia, I care more for bits of Surrey, Saint John's Wood, Charlotte Street, Port-Cros, Malin, Ted, Tommy, Mahony and Martigues than for the Balkan League, the Little Entente or the safety of Armenia. Deeply as I love my own country and more deeply as I love my own village — London, Eng. — I demand the right to add as I please to my affections for places and for people. The war has left me, as it has left so many others of my generation, with a fixed decision never again to be stampeded by popular clamour into loves or hates. No more 'gallant allies,' no more 'cowardly enemies'! As Ezra Pound says in one of his poems, if I don't misquote him, 'I am homesick after mine own kind.' Some of 'mine own kind' I have found in every country I have ever visited: and not all the wars nor all the 'propaganda' in the world will ever again force me, a free-born man, to modify my natural likes and dislikes by a hair's-breadth. After all, there may have been something in Lillian's contention when, in the New York speak-easy, she suddenly labelled me an 'internationalist.' Perhaps I am. For wherever I find people who, as the saying is, 'speak the same language,' I never feel a foreigner.

II

On the following morning young B. and his wife, to whose care L. had entrusted me, called for me at my hotel and drove me to Plymouth and then on to the B. cranberry bogs. It was a cold, bright day, very tonic and bracing, and the drive in the open car did me all the good in the world. The countryside near Boston reminded me greatly of Sweden.

There was something hard and cruel about it, a lack of natural fertility which must have tried the courage and tested the endurance of the puritan settlers. The wooden houses, some of them more than two centuries old, save for the fact that they were painted white instead of red or yellow, had also a very Swedish appearance. The fact that no railing, wall or fence separated one house and garden from another rather shocked my English notions of privacy. I confess I like a garden wall and a garden gate! Plymouth, with the famous Rock, was rather a disappointment to me. Like so many Swedish country towns, it was clean and tidy but lacking in interest or 'atmosphere.' As we drove on, through a country of lakes and stunted forests, the resemblance to Sweden became more and more marked. The home of Mr. and Mrs. B., young B.'s parents, with its lovely situation overlooking a lake and a wide vista of forest, and its extreme loneliness and remoteness, reminded me very much of certain Swedish country-houses in the neighbourhood of Gothenburg. I have never been in the Swedish province of Norrland, where the Swedish cranberries come from — *lingon*, cranberry jam, appears on every Swedish dinner-table and is a national necessity — but I imagine it must be a country of bogs and lakes much resembling Mr. B.'s estate.

After lunch, we drove to Cambridge, the suburb of Boston in which Harvard is situated. On our way I was shown the house in which Longfellow lived. It was just the kind of house in which he *would* have lived. As I looked at it I became aware of subtle emanations of New England uplift, and

the ghosts of Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and other nineteenth-century worthies seemed to lend a more than North Oxford smugness to these comparatively calm suburban streets. I was reminded by them a little of Tulse Hill, Streatham and Clapham, those homes not of the New England but of the South London 'conscience.'

IV

LITERARY EVENING

I HAD not been more than a week in New York when I was one day summoned to the telephone, and heard a rather drawling voice that seemed familiar and was certainly English. 'Is that you, Goldring? Why didn't you tell me before that you were in New York? Look here, won't you come and dine with me to-night at the Arts' Club . . .' The voice was Ford Madox Ford's. I was next door to the Arts' Club when I received this message, in the hospitable 'Players,' for which I had been put up on arrival by a friendly publisher, and I was fortunately free.

The first thing I noticed about Ford, after we had greeted one another, was the fact that he seemed as completely at home in New York as he is in Montparnasse. The club was very full of people of both sexes, women perhaps predominating, and the arts were much in evidence. Pictures of all kinds covered the walls, and in two large rooms on the ground floor were displayed all the season's publications — a really admirable idea, this. We browsed among the new books for a few minutes, and then went in to dinner. No sooner had I opened my napkin than a strange thing happened. From the rather unduly talkative man of forty which I know myself to be, I found myself suddenly changing, slipping back into my own past, becoming once again a shy and tongue-tied youth, 'having dinner with the editor.' Filled with amused astonishment, I devoured my

blue-fish, failed to eat my first 'alligator pear' (because there was none left), and to the accompaniment of Ford's agreeable monotone sent my thoughts travelling back to the far-off days when he actually *was* my Olympian chief. And after dinner, while Ford was writing letters and I was alone with my cigarette, all sorts of memories came crowding in upon me.

When I was a boy of twenty-one, just beginning to earn my living on the staff of 'Country Life,' after a few terms at Oxford, my Editor introduced me one morning to Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer. Ford at that time — it was I think the summer of 1908 — was already making his preparations for launching the famous first number of 'The English Review' and, much to my delight, he appointed me his sub-editor. I had at that period — and, despite appearances to the contrary, have never entirely lost it — a large amount of respect for the real heads of my profession, who, I need hardly say, are not necessarily those who make the most money or receive the largest amount of 'publicity.' Ford then, in those far-away days, struck me as one of the most awe-inspiring figures I had ever met; more awe-inspiring even than the captain of the First Eleven had been, when I was a new boy at school.

My first spell of duty for 'The English Review' took the form of a week-end at his cottage in Kent. (As an employer Ford was always characteristically and incorrigibly hospitable.) The place was somewhere on high ground, with a view across green marshlands to where Rye and Winchelsea stand dreaming by the sea. I seem to remember a long-ish, low house with various outbuildings, in one of

which I slept and in one of which I remember taking down in longhand, at Ford's dictation, one of the most graceful letters, to accompany a substantial cheque, which I imagine that any editor has ever written to a contributor, however distinguished. The letter was to Thomas Hardy, to thank him for the poem called 'A Sunday Morning Tragedy,' which subsequently appeared at the beginning of the first number of the review. From it I got my first glimpse of how, in an ideal world, the old and great should be addressed by their younger *confrères*.

The next incident which I can recall with any vividness was also a week-end, this time with Joseph Conrad, who was then living in a gloomy old farmhouse near Luton. I don't exactly know why Ford took me down there with him, unless it was that in those days he was amusingly 'baronial' and regarded me as his 'suite' or retinue. Anyway, editor and 'retinue' arrived at Luton on a dripping-wet afternoon, and got into a stuffy fly which very slowly splashed its way along the country lanes to Conrad's door. The house was surrounded by trees and seemed to me unutterably melancholy. After dinner, Ford, Conrad, and the 'retinue' went up to Conrad's big candle-lit study on the first floor, and there my elders talked while I sat in a corner and listened. And how they talked! Tirelessly, endlessly, and in a mixture of French and English, they discussed the job of writing in general, and the composition of the first number of the review in particular. They discussed the technique of the novel and the short story, and quoted long passages from 'Madame Bovary' and 'Un Cœur Simple' at

one another, with ever-growing excitement. I can see before me now Conrad's short, broad-shouldered, long-armed figure and his dark, pointed beard and dark eyes, as he stood in the candlelight in front of the fire, with Ford, tall, blond and blue-eyed, by his side; and I can hear again Ford's light-pitched, drawling tones mingling with Conrad's deeper, more staccato notes. What I chiefly remember about the conversation, apart from the references to Flaubert and to the contents of the first number of the review, is that it hinged on the necessity for English writers to follow the example of the French and learn how they got their own effects. Too many even of our best writers, the inference was, have been artists by accident as it were, instead of as a result of deliberately disciplining their talents and learning 'how.' And I got an inkling, during that endless discussion, which prolonged itself far into the night, of just what the review was intended to accomplish for English letters. It was going to set up and maintain a standard of literary values, of *real writing*. And in the first gallant year of its existence, despite incredible difficulties and unimaginable turmoils of which at the time I knew little, no one can now say that it failed in its purpose.

Ford, it must be admitted, made an original and slightly eccentric editor, nor could it well have been otherwise. One single individual could hardly be expected to combine a pure love of good letters, unusual critical insight, admirable gifts as poet and novelist and the most incorrigible sociability with those hard-faced commercial and administrative talents which produce the 'paying concern.' A

'paying concern' 'The English Review,' during the year of Ford's editorship, certainly was not. It was a gallant adventure nevertheless, and has well earned its place in our literary history. Difficulties and turmoils there were in plenty, during the agitated twelve months in which Ford occupied the editorial chair, though I was far too excited, far too youthfully self-centred and too inexperienced to appreciate them. For me that year was one long thrill: in a literary sense it was the *real thing*, at last. The little group of Oxford poets I had met in my undergraduate days and after — James Elroy Flecker, J. D. Beazley, Trelawney Dayrell-Reed and several others — had cast a glamour for me over the profession of letters. We all turned out verses, some of us with great facility, and dreamed of dying young and famous, though Flecker was the only one of our little group who was destined to turn this dream into a reality. But we were all contemporaries and beginners; and even for Flecker the magic of print was at that time hard of achievement. Ford's flat at 84 Holland Park Gardens, where the review was edited, was on the other hand filled daily, to overflowing, not with aspirants but with the tried, the tested, the acknowledged! The Beverly Nichols type of young man (which I am not yet too old to appreciate) scarcely existed twenty years ago. Perhaps if I had been endowed with some of the hard modern insouciance and disillusion I should have noticed in these, to me, august figures only their queer clothes, their odd personal habits and idiosyncrasies. As it was, they were the only sort of 'great' for which I had any respect. And I contrived to keep my two worlds

entirely separate — the world in which I danced more or less efficiently and in which no one knew one end of a book from another, and the world in which I sat demurely in a corner and listened to my betters. Only once or twice did the water-tight compartments fail to act, and I shall never forget the shock I had at a dance at Kent House in Knightsbridge, when I heard my hostess ask Mr. Rudyard Kipling to take Mrs. Humphry Ward down to supper, and thus identified them. Nowadays, I'm afraid, I take but little interest in encountering the writers whose works I admire, in the flesh: and I have come to think the 'public personage' about as cheerless as the public building.

The manuscripts that were sent in to 'The English Review' were housed in a very beautiful old inlaid Spanish cabinet, in Ford's study. When I arrived in the evening — for I sub-edited 'Country Life' during the day, and usually did not appear at Holland Park Avenue before 6 P.M. — I was generally despatched at once to the Shepherd's Bush Empire, to secure a box or two stalls for the 'second house.' After dinner, we chartered a hansom and editor and 'sub' drove down to the music-hall, with the manuscripts which had been sent in during the day. During the performance, or rather during the duller turns, Ford made his decisions and I duly recorded them. But when somebody really worth listening to, the late Victoria Monks for example, appeared on the stage, the cares of editorship were for the moment laid aside. After the theatre we usually went back to the flat and worked on, sometimes till 2 A.M. And that was, more or less, the way in which the most distinguished English liter-

ary periodical of the present century got itself into print.

After all, there must have been a good deal to be said for the Shepherd's Bush Empire, from Ford's point of view. The atmosphere was conducive, there was no one to worry him and he could think undisturbed. In the flat, on the other hand, apart from the endless parties, stray callers seemed to arrive at all hours of the day or night, all of them, no doubt, bursting with advice, suggestions or complaints. By contrast, the music-hall must have seemed a haven of peace.

At one of Ford's tea-parties, I remember seeing a little quiet, grey old man who turned out to be Thomas Hardy. I was standing next to Hugh Walpole, at the back of the room, near the tea-table. The conversation among the lion-cubs in our neighbourhood was no doubt very brilliant and very 'literary,' but suddenly there came the usual inexplicable hush. It was broken by Hardy, who, turning to an elderly lady by his side, remarked, 'And how is Johnny's whooping-cough?'

Conrad was, of course, frequently in the flat during the first months of our existence. I remember once being deputed to stay in after dinner and keep him company, until Ford returned from some party or other. Alas, on this occasion I missed an opportunity. For, as it happened, I had an assignation that evening with a young person of the opposite sex, and my inability to keep it must so have preoccupied my mind that I cannot now recall one word of a prolonged conversation.

Of the young writers whom Ford, I will not say 'discovered' — for that is a word which, in my ex-

perience, invariably arouses rage — but whose gifts he was, at all events, quick to appreciate, the most outstanding figures were P. Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound. Both of them, at that period, in clothes, hairdressing and manner, made no secret of their calling. Pound contrived to look 'every inch a poet' (and still does), while I have never seen any one so obviously a 'genius' as Wyndham Lewis when, after his return from a sojourn abroad, he first appeared at Ford's parties.

The story (no doubt apocryphal) of Lewis's first call at 'The English Review' office formed one of the many legends which collected round that singular flat. Lewis, tall, dark, and with romantically disordered hair, wearing a long black garment buttoned up to his chin, arrived one morning at Number 84 with the manuscript of 'The Pole' in his inside coat-pocket. Getting no answer to his ring, he walked into the flat and searched the first-floor rooms, in vain, for an occupant. Undeterred, he climbed another flight of stairs and, hearing at last sounds of human life, he knocked at the door through which they came, and walked in. It happened to be the bath-room, and there, reclining on his back in the bath, in two feet of hot water, with a large sponge in one hand and a piece of soap in the other, was the missing editor. Quite disregarding any unconventionality in his surroundings, Lewis at once proceeded to business. After announcing in the most matter-of-fact way that he was a man of genius and that he had a manuscript for publication, he asked if he might read it. 'Go on,' said Ford, continuing to play with his sponge. Lewis then unbuttoned his coat, produced 'The Pole' and

read it aloud. At the end Ford observed, 'Well, that's all right. If you leave it behind we'll certainly print it.' And the interview terminated. The literal truth of the whole or any part of the above story, of course, I cannot guarantee. All I can say is that if it didn't happen, it ought to have happened.

Other distinguished figures who came to the flat were R. B. Cunninghame Graham, who looked like a Spanish hidalgo (and wrote the most illegible hand it has ever been my lot to try to decipher), W. H. Hudson, Edward Garnett, Edward Thomas, Stephen Reynolds and the late Percival Gibbon. Gibbon was a merciless practical joker and used constantly to rag me about my efforts to get my poems published, once pretending that he had just heard that an eminent firm had decided to issue them in a limited large-paper edition. Alas, how eagerly did I allow myself to be deceived! On one occasion he played a joke on Ford with equal success. He arrived at the flat, late one snowy night, in a state of well-simulated horror and consternation. 'Ford, what d'you think has happened?' he gasped. 'I drove here in a four-wheeler, and just as we got near the Tube station the cab stopped suddenly. I got out to see what was up, and found the poor old cabby *dead on his box.* We *must* go out and do something about it.' A wave of humanitarian emotion swept over Ford and his companion. Murmuring 'doctor . . . brandy . . . cold and exposure . . . poor old fellow,' they hurried into their coats and rushed forth into the icy street, followed by the chuckling Gibbon.

Soon after Ford and 'The English Review' parted

company, a small legacy came my way which, with the unwisdom of youth, I promptly 'put into a paper' and became, in my turn, an editor. It was an illustrated monthly magazine which quickly swallowed all the capital invested in it, and died, after a not altogether inglorious existence, within a year. Subsequently I became connected with a firm of publishers which issued at my instigation James Elroy Flecker's 'The Golden Journey to Samarkand,' and also an edition of Ford's 'Collected Poems,' which, out of natural *pietas*, I produced in as beautiful a form as I could contrive. It must now be a rare book, and I wish I possessed a copy of it myself.

I was just wondering where the dickens my copy had got to when Ford finished his letters and suggested that we should go along to one of his addresses — in New York, as in Paris, he defends his working-hours by having several retreats — where a party of young people were expecting us. It was November, but we were in the midst of a heat-wave and the night was warm and starry. The theatres and movies had already begun and the streets were pleasantly deserted, so that, as rarely happens in New York, we were able to stroll in comfort. As we passed into Washington Square, Ford pointed out to me the window of the room in which Henry James was born. And somehow, after that, it didn't seem quite so singular that Ford and I should be strolling about together in New York, after having, but a few months before, strolled about together, in Paris. For the great Henry was not the least august of the contributors to the review. Although I never met him, it fell to my lot to

read his proofs, and I remember once drawing Ford's attention to a passage, in a story whose name I have forgotten, which struck me as odd. It was a question as to whether a gentleman wearing a top-hat *could* put his head, conveniently, through a carriage window and kiss its fair occupant. The point was submitted to the great man, who, I believe, with plans and diagrams and the utmost elaboration, explained precisely how the deed was done.

When we arrived at our destination, it turned out to be a house in a street which Londoners would call 'Early Victorian.' It might easily have been a London street, for it had a name and not a number, and there were none of the usual New York fire-escapes disfiguring its façades. We entered by a basement door, which looked exactly like the entrance to a 'speak-easy,' and making our way into a small back sitting-room, we found awaiting us round a deal table a troup of two or three young poets and a literary critic, not one of whom could have been more affluent than their opposite numbers in Paris or in London. But it was easy to tell that they were all of them interested in writing for its own sake. Soon the conversation became critical and technical — real literary talk, a little in the big bow-wow style — of a kind I hadn't heard for nearly twenty years. For in England, somehow . . . I don't know. Most of the young English writers I have come across have been elegant and moderately affluent personages who try to give the impression of stooping from Mayfair to conquer Bohemia. Their living is complicated rather than plain; and their 'high-thinking' is done 'off stage.' If they want to discuss literature, they either give public

lectures or write essays or 'middles.' But here, in New York, was a group of young people who were talking quite easily and naturally about the subject which interested them most. Ford, of course, was very rightly encouraged to hold the floor. And for about an hour, with elbows on the table, he talked about books and their writers with a judgment, penetration, and wealth of knowledge, which few men in that city of lecturers could have equalled. I suppose he knew perfectly well that he was talking to men who took their jobs seriously, that the atmosphere was right. And it was entirely in keeping with the Ford of 'The English Review' days that, with an engagement-book that could easily have been filled to overflowing with social functions he should elect to spend an evening at his ease, in a basement sitting-room, in a back street, talking about writing. That, to my mind, in an artist, is an indication of purity; and of all the writers I have met Ford was, and is, the purest. Purity is a rare quality and a much-abused word. In the writer or the painter it seems to me to mean an undeviating, undistracted, continuous devotion to the art he practises, *for its own sake*. Nowadays, embittered perhaps by years and disillusion, I am no great respecter of persons; and view most of the celebrities of my trade with suspicion and a certain cynicism. The thrusting *arriviste* who 'gets there,' whose 'prices' are spoken of with bated breath and who is past-master in all the arts of publicity may, and often does, arouse admiration for his technical accomplishment and his dexterity. But only the *pure* writer, to my mind, deserves respect — even if, as is sometimes the case, there is nothing respectable

about him. The 'intention,' as Catholics say, seems to have more to do with it even than achievement.

And so this was New York, the centre of dollar-chasing publicity-mongers, the big, crude, half-civilized city of the European imagination, the city of second-hand critical judgments borrowed from Europe, of boosting and graft and fake and sham! Something seemed to have gone wrong. Bang went another pre-conceived 'impression'! For though, in England, instructed critical opinion has long given Ford his due, it has been reserved, so far, for America to provide in his lifetime that wide public for his works to which a writer of his eminence is obviously entitled. Honour, in short, where honour is due; and America must be honoured not least. Take it all round, of my all-too-few nights in New York, this one was the most unexpected and not the least delightful.

V

RETURNED EMPTY

I

'The whole ship was mine' on the way home. She was a slow boat of about eleven thousand tons. Twenty-five years ago, under the Dutch flag, she had been considered quite a luxurious liner and had carried first and second class, as well as many steerage passengers. Now she was given up to 'tourist thirds'; and instead of the four or five hundred whom she could easily accommodate, she cleared from New York with no more than twenty passengers on board of her. It was exciting to watch the famous French and English liners, all blazing with lights and throbbing with life and movement, getting off ahead of us. Our forlorn little ship was the last to leave, and as we cast free from our moorings there was no one to cheer our departure or to wave a valedictory handkerchief.

At breakfast the next morning the handful of passengers assembled, inspected each other, and relapsed into a sullen despair. Everybody on board was bored from the start, from the Captain to the members of the orchestra (who scraped out selections from H.M.S. Pinafore at tea time, to an audience of three); from the Doctor, who had no patients, to the barman who sold no drinks. The Atlantic Ocean, to which I had already taken a strong dislike, soon revealed itself as the most insufferably tedious expanse of dirty grey liquid it has ever been my lot to float on. It wasn't even rough. A flirta-

tion of the kind one reads about in the popular novels, would have been a God-send. 'Booze-hounds,' had there been any on the ship, would have found little difficulty in weaning me from my accustomed abstemiousness. But the bar was as cheerless as a disused Baptist Chapel.

One couldn't even pass away the hours by swapping lies and re-roasting stale chestnuts. The library was composed only of books I did not want to read; and of my own novels the only one it possessed was a work which I would not now willingly inflict even on my worst enemy. Three or four of my novels, especially after a good dinner, I confess that I can re-read with interest, wondering how the dickens I could have been so clever five, ten even fifteen years ago. But to this one, no, not even the best of dinners would ever reconcile me. The few well-meaning souls who took it out of the bookcase returned it hastily. They had all my sympathy.

There was just simply nothing to be done on this dismal voyage home except to review the past and peer anxiously into the future. Through no fault of my own, every imaginable thing about my American trip had gone awry. My affairs, from first to last, had been mishandled for me, and now here I was being hauled back across the ocean just at the moment when I was beginning to find my feet in the New World. The delays of my London publisher had caused the postponment of the New York edition of my novel 'Façade' till the spring, so that I missed even the pleasure (or the mortification) of reading my American reviews. How many other more important things had I not missed? My last hurried days in New York were spent in declining

invitations which I should have loved to have been able to accept. Indeed, hardly any of the things which I had determined to do and see, during my visit to America, had I seen or done. Fate had decreed that I should be 'returned empty,' devoid alike of dollars or of any specifically *American* experiences.

On our third day out I was joined in my daily perambulations by a young American engineer of central European extraction. He was short, swarthy and rather overpowering and aggressive in manner. In a way he was the modern post-war American imitation of the 'superior' Englishman of the days of England's unchallenged supremacy. He was a characteristic specimen of that type of American which, much to our chagrin, has wrested from the English the proud distinction of being the world's most hated race. He and his kind, descending as conquerors upon stricken Europe — which, by the way, is beginning, despite the pessimists, once again to sit up and take nourishment — have managed positively to endear John Bull to the Continental heart. He always called the French the 'poor frogs,' and was at pains to tell me that 'A.E.F.' meant 'After England Failed.' His genial contempt for my own worn-out, senile, 'hard-boiled' country cheered me up considerably. One day, when I was talking to an Englishwoman about home and referring to places that we both knew and loved, our American friend butted in with some information. 'Oh, England,' he said with crushing finality, 'the country's nice enough, but the towns are *ah*ful.' My countrywoman and I relapsed into silence, after this, both thinking of an English town

or two of our acquaintance for which even an American Jew might have shown some respect. But it was impossible to be angry with him: he radiated geniality and kindliness of the sort that grates on every sensitive European nerve. During several weeks in New York I had never once met anybody in the least like him. In European travel, on the other hand, as regards casual acquaintances, I rarely come across any other type of American. Why is it, I wonder? He was just the sort of man who, if he managed to produce a play in London with success, would cable to his agent to try to get some member of our Royal family to make a statement about it for publicity purposes. I gathered that if any eminent person was pointed out to him in the streets of a European city, he went right up and slapped him on the back, introduced himself, talked politics, explained the American viewpoint. As we drew daily nearer Boulogne, his pride and confidence increased. It was clear that for him the 'beaten' countries were France with her cheap franc, and England with her colossal burden of her own and other nations' debts. There is, of course, something to be said for this idea; and the position of Germany to-day lends colour to the argument. Englishmen and Frenchmen, however, do not take kindly to the notion that their gallant American allies joined in the war on their side merely to lay them out and take their money. Nor do they believe it to be true. I tried tactfully to indicate how both the 'poor frogs' and the senile English regarded the matter, and in a moment his face became all over one great beam of geniality and friendliness. It was like a sunburst. He smacked me on the back,

said, 'Boy, put it right there,' gripped my hand, asserted that 'we' — 'frogs' and Englishmen included — were just about the grandest bunch of fellows, if the truth were known, that ever got together, and tried to drag me forcibly to the cocktail bar. Well, I *ask* you?

II

We reached Boulogne at last, and were put on shore in the early hours of a foggy morning, in time to get a few hours' sleep before the Paris *rapide* bore us off to America's European headquarters. The tasks which awaited me on arrival in France were of such a nature that it was many months before I was able to give any sort of connected thought to my New York experiences. But, when at last there came a respite from distresses, and I was able to bask in the healing sunshine of Juan-les-Pins, a well-earned idleness and warmth induced a mood of agreeable reflection. Two old friends, one of whom had ten years' experience of lecturing in America, were my guests and the conversation naturally turned often enough on the Great Republic. While we sat after bathing, in red cane armchairs on the agreeable *terrasse* of the 'Potinière,' which happened to be next door to our flat, we sipped the bronxes brought to us by the smiling François, and exchanged impressions. We talked about the glamour and excitement of New York, its breakneck pace, and of the contrast between its strange, lovely, rather terrifying sky-scrapers and its slipshod untidiness and squalor, its peculiar lack of style, its noise and its traffic jams, and the romance which enveloped it. 'How should it not be

untidy,' said M., 'when the average life of a building in New York is about a generation? What is the use of planting gardens in Washington Square when in a year or two the builders will be feverishly transforming it? Why, even Gramercy Park, which until quite recently was a little oasis of mellowed beauty and calm, has now been half rebuilt. In New York nothing is permanent except the rock of Manhattan and the great rivers which flow past it. No wonder the New Yorkers are restless, no wonder the tempo of New York life is feverish in its rapidity! No wonder, also, that Europe both attracts and exasperates Americans, and that they both attract and exasperate Europeans.'

'Why should Europe exasperate them?' I asked. 'They seem to love it.'

'It exasperates them,' said M., 'because all the things which are most highly valued and respected in European countries are things which money cannot buy. It's a difference in values. Americans here are still constantly coming up against doors which all the gold of Golconda cannot open. The greatest danger for the world that I can foresee is that European countries, England especially, should become entirely Americanized. If we don't wake up pretty soon and put a stop to it, the damage will be done and the whole world will be the poorer — America included. America *especially*. There is a certain symbolic significance in the old chestnut about the American tourist who was shown, in an Italian shrine, a sanctuary lamp which had been kept continuously burning, by the faithful, for seven hundred years. "I guess it's out now," he remarked, as he spat and extinguished it. Europe

still keeps alight the sacred lamps of one kind of civilization. America, not content with developing her own brand, cannot help, half-unconsciously, trying to destroy ours. If Asia is the cradle of all religions, Europe is the continent which has done most to prepare the ordinary "man of action" for the acceptation of religion by developing scholarship, the arts, personal honour, and "principle." "Principle" includes all intellectual integrity, such as that of Socrates or Giordano Bruno; all patriotism worthy of the name; all "causes" for which men have justifiably sacrificed their lives; all "public spirit." It is a first step on the ladder of spiritual progress. Principle begins at the point where it is able to defeat self-interest. The man of principle is the unbuyable man. However humble, he can make all the Rockefellers, Monds, Morgans, and Mellons look foolish. Such men have always existed in Europe since classical times and our most unprincipled blackguards are at least nurtured in respect for them. "Principle," in short, is one of our "sanctuary lamps."

'Of course America also abounds with "men of principle." The Sacco and Vanzetti case showed that. But it still more clearly showed the astonishing inability of the majority of Americans even to understand the meaning of the word. The outburst of rage throughout the world, from China to Peru, which the executions aroused, took most of them entirely by surprise. "What's biting you people?" a friend asked me, at the time. "They were only a couple of wops, anyway." What we call petty theft, Americans call "collecting souvenirs"; and they look on card games quite inno-

cently, as a duel of wits to see who wins. It's perfectly fair if you know the ropes. On the other hand, if most Americans have substituted emotions for principles, they are as a rule boundlessly idealistic and really warm-hearted. And the American idealist is, let us admit it, the salt of the earth. But on the whole, despite the value for the world in general of its fresh idealism, the mechanized civilization of America is best suited to the country which has evolved it. We, in Europe, can learn much from it and can assimilate much; but not too much, otherwise our own civilization will wither. During the war, scared leader-writers used to tell us how terrible it would be if Germany won it. Actually if Germany, by defeating us, had given an impetus to English music, inspired us to establish State-supported opera, taught us how to make artistically satisfying films and how to reorganize our vital industries, we should have had something to console us for our wounded pride. The American intervention in the war, which saved us from that once-dreaded result, a "stalemate," has brought us none of these advantages. We shall have to pay her, for three generations, a colossal tribute; and, far from gaining any cultural benefits from her, she is vulgarizing great masses of our population by the flood of bad films she sends to us from Hollywood and is carrying on an unconcealed Pro-American propaganda throughout our Empire by the same means. Her war wealth enables her to buy up our art treasures from their impoverished owners; and in exchange she sends us jazz and inoculates our business men with "ideals of service"—the worst ideals she has. For some unknown reason England

has gone America-mad. Her prevalent lack of principle in regard to serious social contracts, like marriage, is being eagerly imitated in England. Even her architecture, which, though admirable in America, is totally unsuited to our conditions, is being imitated, while the digestions of our young people are being ruined through their adopting the American habit of consuming short, sharp, and violent alcoholic drinks before meals.

'All this,' said M., beginning now slightly to boom, 'since America did not defeat us in the war, but only got the better of us, seems to me unnecessary. We cannot blame the Americans for it; we can only blame ourselves. We should be all the better friends with America if we could only stop imitating her. Friends we are, thank God, and friends we shall remain. Anything like a war between America and Europe would lead inevitably to the destruction of both our civilizations, and to the domination of the World by Asia — under Russian leadership — and Africa. America is not only genuinely pacifist, but intelligent enough to realize that wars don't pay the countries that begin them.'

M. at this juncture so far forgot his prejudice against short, sharp, and violently alcoholic drinks before meals, as to consent to imbibe another bronx. Wellsian speculations are thirst-provoking; and M.'s picture of bolshevized Asiatics laying the brown man's burden on the white man's shoulders, in the event of Armageddon, seemed to justify a sudden stimulant.

A young American couple, who love London as much as we do and have made their home in it, came in to the Potinière, while we were recovering,

and sat at our table. 'Bow-wow' themes collapsed immediately. Such dears! And just as hard up as ourselves. Europe is indeed overrun with delightful Americans, cultivated and charming, with impeccable manners and faultless taste, who are entirely without visible means of subsistence. Like the Russian aristocrats they keep going, somehow. But how? On the other hand our big hotels, our famous restaurants, haunts of established splendour, are painfully full of strident trans-Atlantics, gorged with money, who, to judge from their demeanour, might twenty years ago have been heaving coal or handing things on trays. But I, for one, shall not join in any depreciation of the *nouveau-riche*. Better the parvenu than the *déclassé* any day of the week, especially on the Côte d'Azur!

While we were talking to Jack and Virginia, the folly of all generalizations about peoples and countries, especially of generalizations about America, came over me once more, for the hundredth time. M. with all his eloquence, had, like Mr. Wells' American, just been going 'orn and orn and orn.' Jack's presence reminded me of one significant fact about our two countries, which seemed to me of more importance than a library full of weighty pronouncements. Among foreign countries, in which one does the average Englishman have the largest number of personal friends? Undoubtedly in the United States. And among European nations, with which country have travelled Americans the closest ties through personal friendships and intermarriage? Surely with England.

Virginia restored our tone by telling us a highly amusing and not too proper story and Jack con-

vulsed us by imitating to the life our pseudo-military *bête noire*. Even M. himself, prophetic and reverberant, ceased to ponder World Problems. Instead, he invited us all to luncheon on the terrace of the Casino, where subsequently, under the mellowing influence of lobster mayonnaise and Montrachet, the process of getting together was satisfactorily accomplished. A kindly twinkle came into the eye of Columbia's eagle, and John Bull's lion, comatose and contented, wagged a friendly tail. The sun shone down on the lazy blue sea, and on the striped awnings, and on the bronzed backs of the bathers, while we, sitting round our shadowed table, decided that the world was after all far too good a place for the quarrelsome to be allowed to spoil it.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES

I

A L'ABRI DU PÊCHEUR

I

When I look back on my visit to Faisrien, it seems to me that one of the oddest things about an odd experience is the chance that took me there. I had come up the line from Auray and had stopped at Quimperlé, enchanted by that view of the Laïta flowing between its thickly-wooded banks which you get as you cross the railway viaduct just before entering the station. Quimperlé is exceedingly picturesque, with its upper town and lower town, and the narrow, breakneck street that unites them. It is full of 'bits' alluring to the amateur photographer; and it has a dullish, rather dear hotel suitable for rural deans and their wives and their nice healthy families. The delightful clear voices of English public schoolboys, all dressed in grey flannel suits, mingled with the jolly laughter of their young sisters and female cousins clad in bright jumpers and short skirts and neat brown brogues, and gave the place an odd atmosphere, difficult to describe. The English had turned the old town into the pleasantest kind of 'family' resort. Charming middle-aged mothers of families sat about under the trees outside their hotel, placid and homely. Decent-looking old clerics, with a vaguely festive or sporting note introduced into their attire, sat with them, with eyeglasses half-falling off their noses, glasses of harmless vermouth-siphon on the

table in front of them, and *The Times* newspaper, three days old, in their hands. And all over the town the young things romped about — supremely confident and possessive, and behaving for all the world as if they owned it. They swarmed in and out of the shops and bought cakes and sweets and picture-postcards, took their films to be developed and generally enjoyed themselves. I felt unpleasantly middle-aged and alone and out of things and I wanted the sea. I like the sleepy, formal little town of France, with grey and stately seventeenth-century houses, and a Grande Place full of shady trees planted evenly in rows, and big quiet cafés; but I do not like them for very long at a time. There is something to me a little depressing, a little devitalized about them. I soon, therefore, had enough of Quimperlé and decided to go to the small *plage* of La Poupoule for a day or two. I left my heavy luggage at the station, packed what I needed into a rücksack, and boarded the dusty motor *diligence* which ran in conjunction with the *rapide* from Paris. Off we went, through the forest of Clohars Carnoët. The 'bus was crammed to suffocation with holiday-makers and the trailer behind it was loaded with their luggage. There was also an advertisement in the 'bus of La Poupoule, showing a picture of the usual 'Palace' Hotel of the smaller French watering-place: *thé dansants*, jazz band and the rest of it. I began to grow uneasy. I didn't in the least want that kind of thing. Evidently I had made a mistake. They had told me that La Poupoule was 'quite a small place,' but I realized from this advertisement that it wasn't my kind of small place. What could I do? It was already half-past

nine at night. The 'bus stopped at a cross-roads, and as it waited, panting, while the conductor delivered some parcels at various cottages, I read the signpost: To La Poupoule 3 kilometres; to Faisrien 2 kilometres. In the distance, looking along the road to Faisrien, I saw the shadowy sea. I got off the *diligence* and stretched my legs. There was a small café at the corner, the kind of wooden hut that in England is usually occupied by an ex-service man. The conductor, after delivering his parcels, had entered it to drink a glass of cider. I hesitated. The driver sounded his horn. The conductor finished his drink, lit a cigarette and resumed his place on the car. The driver looked at me inquiringly. Again I hesitated, and finally I smiled and shook my head, and the *diligence* departed without me. There I was then, two kilometres from Faisrien, on a fine evening in July. The *patronne* of the little café, questioned about Faisrien as she poured out my white wine (I am no cider drinker), remarked that it was just a fishing village. She seemed doubtful as to whether I could get a room, but I might ask there '*à la Descente des Pêcheurs.*'

I started off hopefully down the road. A little moon, lying drunkenly on its back, had made its mocking appearance in the sky, and the sea breeze was caressing and gentle. All the same, those two kilometres were the longest I can remember. I came at last on one of those narrow creeks or arms of the sea which so constantly indent the Breton coast. There were small white houses on either side of it, and on the narrow waterway there floated a number of fishing-smacks. Nearly every house I passed was a *buvette*, but at length I reached one

more imposing in size than the others, which bore over its doorway the name for which I had been told to look. I entered and inquired of an old Breton woman in sabots and white Breton cap whether I could have a room. She directed me to a long, low, ruinous-looking house adjoining her own, which had the single word 'Restaurant' painted above its door. Here once more I inquired. The proprietor of the establishment was a rather frowsy, middle-aged woman, huskily voluble and evidently no Breton. Her assistant, the cook, was a little brown-eyed creature who hobbled about as if she had two left feet. The two women were sitting in the *salle-à-manger* when I arrived, drinking Benedictine by the light of an oil lamp. Both were a little tipsy. A hasty glance at the walls betrayed a collection of the sort of dreadful daubs which would-be artists have left behind them in nearly every Breton fishing village, and I guessed that I had stumbled on one of those 'artists' colonies' where you can live for half-a-crown a day, about which indifferent painters, on their return to Montparnasse or Chelsea, speak in such romantic terms. Yes, a room was vacant. Would Monsieur like to see it? I was led by candle-light up a wooden staircase, and down a long passage to a large apartment containing two double beds. There was no carpet on the floor and no furniture, apart from the beds, except a table, a washstand, and a broken chair. But the room was clean enough, and I was thankful to have found it. The window looked on to the narrow harbour where the fishing-boats lay. On the other side of the water lights shone out from the houses, and from one of them there came the sound

of a mechanical piano and a noise of shuffling feet. Dancing, evidently.

I left my things on the bed and went down to investigate Madame. Would she have a drink with me? She would. Madame's special poison, designated 'Fine Champagne,' was produced, with a siphon. She herself, wisely, stuck to Benedictine. She proceeded to tell me about '*les mauvais anglais*' who lived together in a house on the other bank of the creek and spent all their days in the *buvette* with the mechanical piano. They seemed to amuse her. There was '*le poète, qui ne fait jamais des poèmes,*' and '*le gros monsieur,*' and an ex-commander of a submarine and sundry ladies. Madame was not concerned about their morals — her own profession, in early life, it was all easy to guess at — but she was consumed with curiosity to know whether they lived in pairs, or, so to speak, in group formation. I felt half-inclined to cross at once and investigate these '*mauvais anglais,*' so greatly had my curiosity been whetted. But it was getting late and I was tired. So bidding Madame good-night, I went out and walked up the road to the little white lighthouse and had a look at the sea. I felt oddly excited and exhilarated and expectant. It was a queer place; Madame was queer, and I had a shrewd suspicion that '*les mauvais anglais*' would be queerer still.

II

On the following morning, after swallowing a bowl of rather nasty café-au-lait, and eating a morsel of sour bread and salt butter, I walked down the inclined slope of the *quai*, to the water's edge, and

called, '*Passage*.' After a time a flat-bottomed boat appeared from behind one of the fishing-smacks. It was propelled by an oar twisted to and fro in the stern rowlock by an elderly ferryman with bushy, black moustaches. He was dressed in a bright blue canvas suit, very much patched, and regarded me with gloomy disapproval. I got in, followed by a small boy carrying a basketful of silvery fish and a young fisherman who held a large crab in either hand. The fisherman was put aboard his smack, Les Deux Communistes, and the small boy and I proceeded to the opposite shore.

I had climbed a flight of slippery stone steps and was proceeding up a steep and stony village street when I saw a man coming towards me, a strange and unforgettable figure that seemed, somehow, familiar. His dark, greying hair was mostly standing on end; he wore an ancient silk shirt, intended to go with a collar, and nondescript trousers. His bare feet were stuck into a pair of dilapidated *espadrilles*, and like my late friend Edward (whose story I have recorded elsewhere) he was faithful to a monocle. His feet, as he descended the hill, seemed to describe half-circles, as if he were trying to tie them into knots. It seemed impossible that he should keep his balance.

We met; we stopped; we looked at one another; and both of us exclaimed simultaneously, 'Good Lord!' Could it be? It was. Of all unlikely people to encounter in a Breton fishing village, it was Alistair. I had not seen Alistair for a couple of years. The last time I encountered him was in a select resort, full of rich, fruity types, known as the 'Circolo Sportivo Italiano.' The club, whose

whereabouts I will not reveal, was at one time a popular meeting-place, between the hours of three and half-past five in the afternoon, of members of an esoteric suicide club, who, finding the post-war world a pointless sort of place, were anxious to leave it as cosily as possible. I used to go there as a kind of 'rescue' worker, in pursuit of a friend who would *not* get on with a book for which his publishers were clamouring. I shall never forget that smoky back room in Soho with the green baize tables, nor the spectacle of Alistair sitting huddled in his chair, unconscious and at peace, while his angry companion hissed to the company at large: 'What am I to do with this dee-gen-errr-ate arrr-eesto-craat?'

'Put him in a cab and send him home,' seemed the obvious reply. Alistair, gentlest and sweetest of inebriates, surrendered himself like a tired child to his nurse, and supported by my arm, tottered obediently to the car. His friend, still declamatory about 'degenerate aristocrats,' went with him. That was the last, as I imagined, that I was likely to see of Alistair. And here he was again.

'I really feel like death this morning,' he observed with a shiver, when we had shaken hands and remarked, 'How did you get here?' and so forth. 'Won't you come into our pub? A gin fizz is absolutely imperative. Thank God, we've got some. It arrived yesterday.' He led the way up some stairs into a low, dark café called 'A l'Abri du Pêcheur,' overlooking the harbour — it was the café with the mechanical piano — and sank on to one of the rush-bottomed stools. 'Madame Adrienne,' he groaned, 'two hubidges avec capivvy, for

the love of God. Oh, what is it? Du gin, deux oranges, siphon? I always have the most frightful aphasia in the early morning. Can't talk French or English or anything else.'

Madame Adrienne, a tall and handsome young woman, with twinkling brown eyes, pale freckled cheeks and dazzling white teeth, had already set about providing 'Monsieur Aleestaire' with his requirements. Her flowing white Breton cap and voluminous black skirts suited her to perfection. Like all the village women, she wore no stockings and her neat bare ankles, as she moved about the café, looked most enticing. In the house she wore carpet slippers over which she put on wooden sabots when she went abroad. She laid the oranges, the gin bottle, and the siphon on the table between us, with a caressing, motherly gesture. I could see that her heart was touched by 'Monsieur Alistaire.'

When Alistair had consumed two ample gin fizzes *à l'orange*, his hands ceased to tremble, and he was able to light a cigarette without burning the end of his nose. He beamed at me benignly and I gathered that he now felt strong enough to tell me all about it. Apparently he had spent most of the time which had elapsed since our last meeting, in Montparnasse. He did not seem very certain on the point; but he thought it must have been Montparnasse. Then in the spring he and his friend Hugo — the one who had called him a 'dee-gen-errr-ate arrr-eesto-craat' in the Circolo Sportivo — had decided to go for a walking tour in Brittany. Again Alistair was vague as to details. Somehow or another they had reached Quimperlé, and in the hotel sacred to rural deans they had found themselves

penniless and in pawn. There was nothing for it but to go on drinking the proprietor's wines and *apéritifs* and wait for something to turn up. 'We were just going to be thrown into gaol or handed over to the consul, when an English couple, Tilly and Wilfrid, arrived — you'll see them in a moment. They turned up with a lot of luggage, two dogs and a large bird-cage with a dead canary in it. They more or less took charge of us and kept the proprietor at bay until I got a cheque from home and paid the bill. Hugo went back to Paris, and the rest of us, by some accident or other, discovered this place and found rooms with a most sympathetic family who let us have the run of the house and do exactly as we like. Then I must tell you that Tilly's school friend Anna arrived, and after her a sort of Russian hanger-on of Anna's called Ovna — *you* know, it's really one of those names like Elena Mikhailovna: quite impossible. After that we rescued Bird from the clutches of a mad-drunk who used to cut her head open with bottles: a nasty kind of fellow. She's been chucking blinds ever since, to get over him. Finally there's Binks, who's a most useful chap. He gets our gin for us. He used to be in the Guards and got wounded five times during the war. . . .'

'And you are all under the same roof?' I asked. 'Yes, we've got the whole house,' replied *le poète*. 'Monsieur and Madame Pierre and the old aunt and the two children have moved out into a stable at the back, which they share with their goats.'

'How long have you all been here?' I inquired. 'Oh, since April,' said Alistair. 'As we've none of

us any money to speak of, except Binks, it looks as if we shall be here for ever.'

One by one this strange, forlorn community of waifs and strays trickled into the pub for their morning corpse-revivers. First of all came Bird, a tall, dark-haired Yorkshire girl with pale, rather distraught, blue eyes. She was dressed in a frock of a bright shade of terra-cotta, made of the same material that the fishermen used for their slacks, which she called her 'sardine-suiting.' Bird's drink was *anis*, with a glass of brandy in it and a spot of water. 'Oh, my God,' she said. 'Last night *was* awful!' Wilfrid came in next. He was very much the ex-naval officer type and one of the few sane, sober, and responsible members of the group. Soon after him came Tilly, dressed in a pair of Alistair's silk pyjamas and a raincoat. She was a small, vivacious, witty and very attractive creature. In her own way I guessed that she, too, was one of the victims of the war. Defiantly she seemed to ask the world the question: What's the good? Anna was a quiet, good-looking girl, as much out of the picture as Wilfrid. Ovna, with her round, pasty face and round brown eyes, was the 'inevitable Russian' from Montparnasse. She had an enormous appetite for food, drank milk and water, and translated Russian books into French. She seemed mildly amused at everything, but never spoke. She was there and yet not there. Finally, the party was completed by Binks. There came a shout from the street: 'Ha-ha! Berlud!'—and the next moment the figure of the tall ex-guardee was darkening the doorway. He had on a khaki shirt, a pair of grey shorts, stockings with smart leather garters and very neat brown

brogues. A gold-rimmed monocle was screwed into his left eye. I had always supposed guardsmen to be mostly fools, either very aristocratic and heroic, or else the too shiny sons of plutocratic fathers, and the few specimens I had encountered outside the pages of Ouida scarcely deserved an appellation so polite. Binks had a particularly vapid smile. It was some days before I realized that this smile was simply a cunning disguise. For if Binks had carried his accomplishments about with him, marked in plain figures, he would have been insufferable. He remains in my memory as, without any exception, the most efficient man I have ever come across. He talked, both fluently and correctly, French, German and Italian. He could adapt himself, easily, to any company. His clothes, shoes and all his belongings were invariably in the most perfect order. He could drink anybody under the table. Although he had been cut open and sewn up again on several occasions, and was not supposed to bathe, he went in one day and beat our crack swimmer with ease. He never seemed to be tired; and as a popular entertainer, a one-man turn, he was unsurpassed. To an appreciative audience he could talk nonsense for hours at a time. And when Alistair pulled the remains of his intellect together and amused himself by trying to talk sense, Binks's staggering reserves of knowledge, carefully kept under the counter, induced a respect which in Alistair's case came near to adulation. One bond in common Binks had with the rest of the party, however — he was not burdened with anything that could be termed a 'moral sense,' and — the war being over and his career as a soldier at an end — there was absolutely nothing that he could think of to do.

'You see, it's like this,' Alistair once remarked. 'We don't want to do anybody any harm. We just want to be let alone. We live here, in comfort, on £1 a week each, and we amuse the natives. You wouldn't find a convent, or any other moral or religious community, living together as happily as we do. We don't pinch each other's things, we aren't jealous, we never have rows. We get on perfectly. None of us cares very much if he lives or dies. We are much happier here than we should be anywhere else. We can't help being the sort of people we are, can we? In London, the community would persecute us. Especially the patriots who enjoyed the jolly old war so much. London has a moral sense — a most uncomfortable thing. We haven't any, unless Ovna possesses a Russian one. Ours got "shot off at Mons," or, at all events, didn't survive the recent disturbances. We don't want to be rescued, or reformed, or made to work, or sent to teetotal nursing-homes, or messed about. Why should we be? What for? What good would it do us or anyone else? We only want to be let alone, and left in peace.'

III

For a community whose principal occupation, with one or two exceptions, was the consumption of alcohol, *les mauvais anglais* lived strenuous and exciting lives. 'My dear chap,' said Binks one day, 'you think that just because you sit in your room at that old procuress's pub on the other bank, slog away at some book for an hour or two every morning, and go for a walk in the afternoon, that you really work. Why, *we* keep at it every day, from ten

till two!' It was true; they did. In their intervals for rest and solid refreshment after their toils, they gathered round the deal table in their communal dining-room at Madame Pierre's and endeavoured to eat. One couldn't imagine a scene more harmless or more homely than their luncheon table. All round them, on the walls, were dreadful daubs painted by previous tenants of the house. They themselves were innocent of any such crimes. None of their party had ever made a sketch, nor did they even write letters. (At moments of acute emergency they despatched telegrams.) On the hearth, keeping watch over her family, sat a large, reddish-yellow sheep-dog named Mees. By her were her two pups, one black and one yellow, whose names, originally Hamlet and Omelette, had been reduced to Amlet and Omlet. Muffin, a little cockney, rough-haired terrier, noted for his swimming exploits, sat with expectant nose by his mistress's chair. Through the open window there was a vista of green garden and blue sky, with Madame Pierre's goats grazing peacefully in the foreground. You couldn't imagine a more idyllic scene, or a better-behaved or more agreeable set of people. If one of them was too exhausted by his or her exertions in the intensive consumption of *apéritifs* to tackle any food, he or she retired unobtrusively to bed. Nothing could have been more good-humoured and refined.

The '*mauvais anglais*' threw themselves wholeheartedly into all the local festivities. What would the dances '*A l'Abri du Pêcheur*' have been like without the sylph-like grace of Tilly, of Anna, and of Bird? How would the fisherboys, without their

aid, have learnt the delights of tango and of jazz? And when the older fishermen assembled at the pub to sing their interminable Breton songs the '*mauvais anglais*' were always there in force to stand a round of cider to the singers and their audience.

At the Faisrien Regatta, a little cottage overlooking the harbour was put at the disposal of the distinguished visitors; and Madame Adrienne's brother maintained for them a constant supply of brandies and sodas. They entered heartily into the general gaiety. They bought little swishy canes and ticklers and bright green sweets from the stalls; they hailed youth and beauty with roguish smiles of enticement and shouts of welcome; they applauded the winners of the races; they stood the manager of the sardine factory a drink. In their unassuming, unpretentious way they were veritable outposts of Empire. What would the Regatta, or Faisrien itself, for that matter, have been without them? Half the gossip of the little place centred round their acts and deeds. . . .

Certainly, it was not for me to throw up my hands in horror or disgust. I am inclined to believe that every individual who has no occupation and no dependants has an inalienable right to end his life, if he wishes to, in any way he pleases. And no one is so degenerate, so degraded, so drunken, but has some qualities which it is the custom to label 'good' — qualities of heart or mind or spirit, which the more naïf and charming of the saints, Saint Francis of Assisi, for example, would have but little difficulty in recognizing. There was no bile or spleen about *les mauvais anglais*; they were not ambitious, grasping, or cruel: they were merely to

the *n*th degree futile, and emotionally exhausted. The world had been too much for them. They had retired from it.

IV

I must tell you about 'Mees.' She was a dog whose face wore an expression of gloomy sagacity, like a police inspector. She had one of those large, muscular, expressive tails that knock chairs over and lash the floor in a disciplinary manner. 'Mees' was a great disciplinarian, firm but kindly. When her charges were 'chucking a blind' of too generous dimensions, her great tail would go slap, slap among the tables and chairs until she had got them on their feet and out into the street. Her sheep-dog strain gave her a passion for 'rounding-up.' She would never rest until the whole flock, with no exception, was safely inside the fold. My habit of shouting '*Passage*' at eleven o'clock, and making my way to the other side of the harbour, caused her exquisite uneasiness as soon as she got to know me. On one occasion she took a flying leap into the boat, crossed with me, mounted to my bedroom, and sat looking at me with reproachful eyes, banging the floor with her tail in a frenzy of anxiety. I had the greatest difficulty to persuade her to go home. For the first four weeks after Amlet and Omlet were born she was a most careful mother. Growls protected her offspring from the petting of strangers, and sometimes she would leap at people of whom she was suspicious, pushing them away with her forepaws and making snapping noises. There was no more vice in her than there is in the police-sergeant who backs his well-trained horse into a crowd. She was

responsible and disciplinary — that was all. But after a time she grew not only bored with Amlet and Omlet, but extremely jealous of them. If they were too much petted, she would stalk angrily round the room, roughly pushing her long nose under people's arms, demanding the caress to which her age and her many virtues entitled her. I called one morning *chez* Madame Pierre, and walking up through the sleeping house, came to the room which *le poète* shared with the sailor. Both had been much fatigued with wine on the previous evening, and they had collapsed on the floor in an effort to put each other to bed. Mees was there on guard, gloomy and official as ever. She had slowly and methodically licked as much of them as she thought it appropriate to lick. She could do no more after that than keep watch.

Muffin was an animal of an altogether different type from Mees. He was a cunning little cockney guttersnipe of a rough-haired terrier, with innumerable tricks, but — like his mistress, perhaps — a sadly defective moral sense. He was the fastest-swimming dog I have ever seen, and it was a wonderful sight to watch him leap into the harbour after his ball, dash for it like a streak of lightning, and bring it back to shore. He was taken into Quimperlé one day to lunch *chez* Monsieur Jérome — he of the sleek black hair and the imposing rotundity of figure. During the meal he disappeared; and though the town-crier cried for him at every street corner he was not to be discovered. Two days later, at ten o'clock at night, he knocked at Monsieur Jérome's door, and, as *le patron* expressed it, demanded a night's lodging — in a strong British accent! For

the rest, he was a quarrelsome, obstreperous little beast, with no manners at all. He greatly disliked the interminable songs of the old fishermen, and after ten minutes or so would express his boredom by a burst of harsh and ill-tempered barking which had to be hastily smothered. I shall always connect the sound of Tilly's hand spanking Muffin's unrepentant body with my memories of those strange, harsh songs.

V

It was time for me to go. For one reason, Alistair, whom I had brought over with me to the 'restaurant' for luncheon, had struck abject terror into the cook. He had fixed his monocle into his eye and turned upon her a glassy stare when she hobbled in with the fish. Growling horribly, he had demanded a goat, all white, *sans tâches . . . pour des mystères!* It must be brought immediately!

The poor woman shrieked and fled. Alistair had once dabbled in black magic, and in his less coherent moments he was apt to come out with these disconcerting demands. He had a great desire to see what the Devil was like, and never would heed my assurances that he would discover quite quickly enough, and would be lucky if he did not see an army of devils — and serpents as well: green ones. What would have been a harmless pleasantry in Montparnasse was a more serious business in Brittany, particularly within sight of the Île de Groix — the Isle of the Sorceresses. The Bretons don't chatter about black or any other magic: they know things. The little cook with the brown eyes and the two left legs never recovered from her shock, and

ever afterwards included me in her displeasure. . . .

And then I was beginning to catch the vocabulary of *les mauvais anglais*, beginning to order 'verres de hubidge avec capivvy,' to talk about 'chucking blinds,' 'registering gent,' 'making a tea gesture,' and so forth. Almost everything that was not 'registered' was a 'gesture.' One felt one's brain was being eroded.

And whoever else got drunk, it seemed to me that the postman, at least, might wait until his round was over, before passing out. This individual, who swayed up and down the country roads on his dilapidated bicycle, had been continuously drunk for over five years. It was very amusing, until you found that he delivered your letters, those that he did deliver, five days late.

On one occasion he handed me the entire post for the commune, and then collapsed with dignity on to a pile of stones by the roadside.

It was, undoubtedly, time to go. On the night before my departure I crossed the harbour, for the last time, to bid farewell to *les mauvais anglais*. There was hardly any water in the creek, owing to the exceptionally low tide, and I had to go slipping and sliding across the mud to where the ferryman waited for me. Madame Adrienne's pub, when I reached it, was crammed with fisherboys in 'sardine suitings' of various shades of colour ranging from pale blue to brightest scarlet. Some were dancing, others sat on the low rush-bottomed stools, drinking cloudy, orange-coloured cider out of thick tumblers. A haze of grey smoke hung over everything, and I had some difficulty in finding my compatriots. Their table was in a far corner of the long

low room, abominably close to the piano. They looked rather jaded, I thought; as if their drinks, instead of enlivening them, had given them indigestion. Alcohol is a notoriously capricious poison. Alistair made an effort to shout through the noise, then gave it up. What he tried to say was, I think, 'I wish we hadn't finished all the gin.' I suggested that they should move to the *boulangerie*, higher up the street, where there was more room and less row. But this, it seemed, was impossible. Madame Adrienne would not like it. 'The Lord only knows what we owe her,' Bird groaned. Poor dears, they couldn't have changed their habits, even if they had wanted to! There isn't much freedom, in this world, alas, for the insolvent. I said good-bye to them; and crossed the water again in a mood of depression. It was a starry, moonlit night, and there was a cool breeze blowing in from the sea. The fishing fleet would set out at dawn — the Reine des Flots, the Vive Jaurès, Les Deux Communistes, and all the rest of them — and the uneventful life of the village would go on as it had gone on for generations. But what about — I couldn't help asking myself the question — what about *les mauvais anglais*? What the dickens would *they* do in three months' time?

The next morning, when I was about to take my place in the fish *camion*, en route for Quimperlé, Bird, in her sardine suiting, turned up to bid me farewell. She looked unhappy, and extremely ill, and gave me some small commissions to do for her in London.

'What's going to become of you all,' I asked, 'when autumn is here? Where are you all going to?'

Her pale grey-blue eyes looked, for a moment, distraught with horror and anxiety.

'We *don't know*,' she said. 'We *none* of us know!'

Le poète, in his thin silk shirt and frayed trousers, had come upon us unperceived. Twirling his monocle and laughing, he observed in his velvety baritone:

'After all, Bird, as we none of us particularly care, it doesn't so very much matter. . . . Does it?'

II

ENVOI

II

From Gothenburg to Sassnitz, from Sassnitz to Hamburg, from Hamburg to Cologne, from Cologne to Liège, from Liège to Paris, from Paris to a village at the back of Cannes, from Cannes to Paris, from Paris to London, from London to Esbjerg, from Esbjerg to Copenhagen, and from Copenhagen back to Gothenburg — this little round, completed in about six weeks, left me, as it would leave most men, in a mood of rather melancholy reflection. The more one is bumped and hurried about Europe, in the company of hundreds of other poor devils all undergoing the same torture, and all endeavouring to while away the tedium of railway travel by discussing the conditions (always bad) in their respective occupations and countries, the more dejected one becomes. What a life! What a world! And yet one is not even allowed to make a satisfactory grimace of disgust at the whole business, for no sooner has one decided to take the advice of Job's counsellors and to make a few terse observations to the Almighty before putting one's head in the gas oven, than along come those amazing compensations which somehow make the job of living worth the pains. A kiss of affection, a handshake, a winter sunset in the Estérel, the first wild, intoxicating day of spring, a child's shy confidence, a book which says all the things one has longed to say for years and never known how: these are the

sort of things which reconcile one, rather disconcertingly, to the trivial round, the common task.

En voiture! Another train, followed by — almost without exception — the vilest cross-channel steamer that would be tolerated in any civilized quarter of the globe. The new boats which take the traveller from Holyhead to Kingstown (or should I attempt to spell Dunlaoghaire?) are incomparably better than any channel packet which I have yet encountered. It would be a mercy both to Englishmen and Frenchmen if the existing fleet of channel steamers, with one or two exceptions, could be painlessly torpedoed. In the meanwhile, I unite my humble groans to the protests of more eminent travellers which appear from time to time in the English press. '*Can't something be done about it?*' is, I think, the conventional English attitude. I suppose our earliest ancestors said it first on the morrow of the battle of Hastings, and we have been saying it steadily ever since. Nothing, alas, can ever be done about anything in our beloved country. Things happen before we know where we are. A Jew has an idea, an Irishman and a Welshman (having the gift of the gab) 'reconcile opposing interests,' a Scotchman obtains the contract and an Englishman, purple with apoplectic rage, writes to *The Times* newspaper to say, 'Can't something be *done* about it?' The poor Englishman was, of course, 'done' hours ago, while he was having his world-famous bath. (We ought, undoubtedly, to get up earlier.) These bitter reflections are wrung from me less by the inadequacy of the older cross-channel steamers than by the appearance of London after a six months' absence. Those of us who ven-

tured a tiny, pained bleat about the destruction of Regent Street were reviled in the press for being pedantic highbrows with no real appreciation of architecture. The journalists told us to wait and see the magnificent 'Renaissance palaces' in gleaming Portland stone which were about to arise. The old Regent Street, a rotten affair of stucco, which cost a paltry million, was nothing (they said) compared with the resurgent Regent Street which, when completed, would cost no less than £10,000,000. A cruel taxi-driver relentlessly bore me, tired as I was, along the whole dreary length of the 'Renaissance palaces,' a few minutes after I emerged from Victoria. To be just, Piccadilly Circus, never distinguished during my lifetime (however elegant it may have been in the age of Nash), shows signs of improvement. And the new Quadrant, despite certain grievous pangs in regard to its predecessor, must be admitted to have its points. Again, the rebuilt Café Royal, if one were not rather ill-tempered about the whole proceeding, would claim a certain amount of respect. But as one advances up the street, as one approaches Oxford Circus and passes into Upper Regent Street! '*Can't* something be done about it?' asks the unfortunate 'pre-war' Londoner, in blank dismay. Nothing, of course, can.

It has become fairly clear now that absolutely nothing in London is sacred any longer. London is nobody's business. Nobody cares enough. Nobody can do anything. If the Foundling Hospital, with all its touching and beautiful associations, can be sacrificed callously to the land speculators, without arousing any effective protest, then anything is possible. After such an event as the wanton de-

struction of the Foundling, I should not like to be the caretaker of a London cemetery. The agitation caused by the tens of thousands of old Londoners turning violently in their graves, unable to write to *The Times* newspaper, but thinking, in true English fashion, 'Can't anything be *done* about it?' must arouse such ghostly commotion among the tombstones that those in charge of those 'towns without a market' must feel their job no sinecure.

I remember well, when I was a boy, being shown by my father the dignified late-seventeenth-century house in Lincoln's Inn Fields in which my grandfather spent most of the laborious years of his professional life. There, on the first floor, was the stately window of his office, through which, looking up now and then from his documents, he could see the same beloved trees under which, on summer mornings, I myself have sat so often. And there were funny anecdotes, which it amused me to hear (for the 'professional' classes are just as interested in such matters as their superiors in the social scale) of the first of a dynasty of clerks, a crusted Dickensian character who suffered greatly from catarrh, who used to welcome prospective clients of the firm — country squires and such like — with the raucous injunction: 'Shut that door!' There was a tree in the garden at the back of this house — a few years ago, certainly, it was still there — under which my father used to sit, in the summer, until his father was ready to take him along to 'The Cock' in Fleet Street, or, perhaps, to the Law Society, for the Victorian mid-day dinner. Do I flatter myself that when I grow older I shall be able to take my sons to Lincoln's Inn Fields and be pleasantly

reminiscent? Not a bit of it. One glance at the delightful square shows that it is doomed. Numbers 59 and 57, if they have not already gone, are inevitably signalled for destruction. 'The Cock' in Fleet Street is a new building. Perhaps even the Inns of Court may go within a generation or two. I doubt if I shall be able to show my sons the chambers in Verulam Buildings where my father, before he married, had 'that amusing experience'; nor the musty chambers in the Middle Temple where my maternal grandfather, with red hair and a 'Newgate fringe,' spent so many years, so very profitably to himself, advising people 'not to take the matter into court.' (He was, I believe, a prodigy of legal learning, but no advocate.) All that constitutes London, for the Londoner, seems doomed. Our poor old piles of brick that we so dearly love must be hacked away by the patient house-breaker in order that elegant 'Renaissance palaces' may arise in their place. The 'Anti-Scrape' Society will issue its protest, and a few agonized letters will appear in *The Times*, just as the last brick in King's Bench Walk falls to the ground amid a cloud of dusty mortar.

But the city of London, its pubs and its privacies, its 'mateyness' and good-humour, its invincible geniality were what I most needed. Any more travel, I felt I could scarcely bear; and I hankered for no New Worlds, for I am not by nature a conqueror. Some are: and some are not.

But the voyage was impending. At Mr. K.'s I was snowed under with cards, addresses and advice. Dear Miss K. gave me a card to a relative of hers who 'had the goods.' Augustus John told me to go

and see the Anderson Galleries. Other people gave me other instructions. And I didn't in the least want to go. I wanted to continue talking to Tommy about that little room up the staircase in the Oxford Union Library, in which we both of us received our education.

More packing. More trains. Louis Wilkinson, Nan, Mahony and myself at Southampton, together with Llewellyn Powys and Alyse Gregory and the Powys brother who builds empires in South Africa. The huge ship. Off, at last. New York. Boston. Three weeks continuous parties, unimaginable fun and hospitality, then crash — a sand-bagging telegram. Ford sees me off on a queer old English ten-day cabin class boat, with hardly any passengers on board. Boulogne. Then once again Paris. A lifetime of worry concentrated in two days. Cannes. A deep breath. Another deep breath. Juan-les-Pins. Sunshine and the sea — not to speak of a good deal of rain. Provence. A respite. And now — what next?

THE END

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PEOPLE AND PLACES

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By Douglas Goldring